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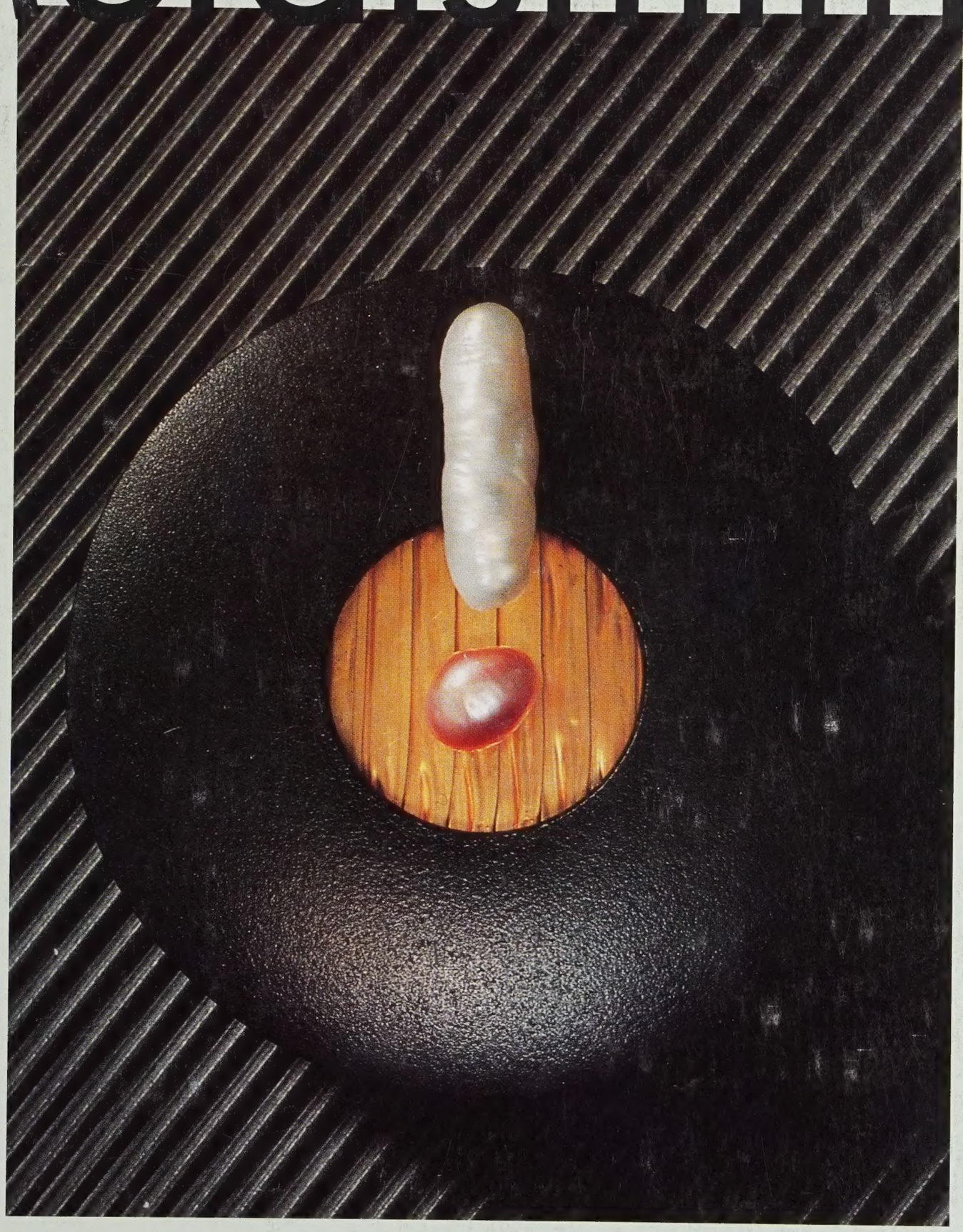

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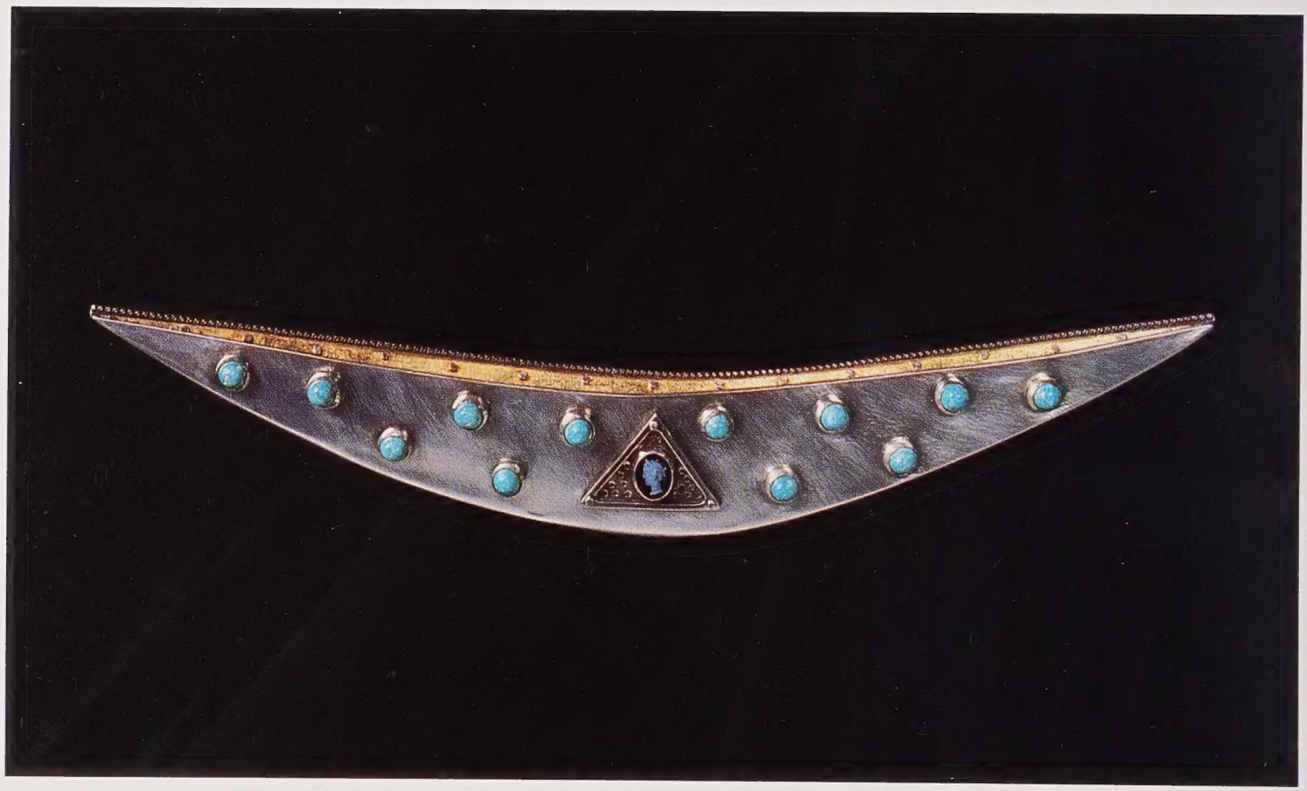

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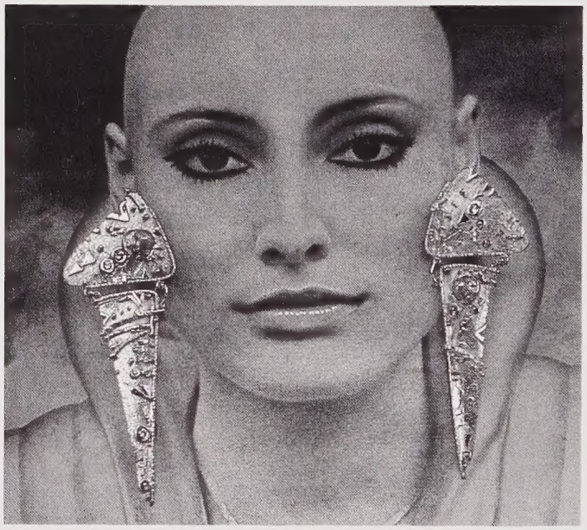

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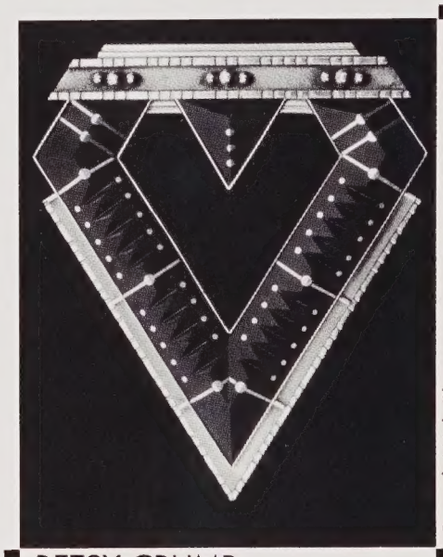

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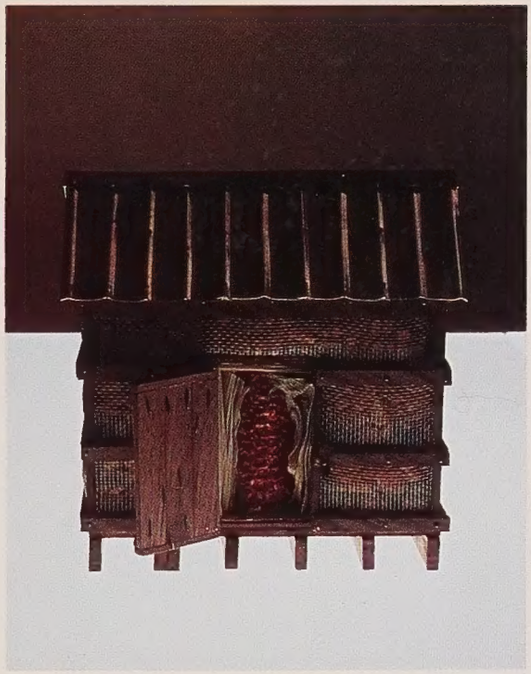
JANUARY

Metalsmith

Winter 1993

Volume 13 Number 1



Daniel Waverly Eaves, *Corn Cobs*
wood, tin, silver, corn, 6 x 4½ x 2½", 1991
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Editorial

Metalsmith is a magazine produced by and for artists whose media is metal. There are many shortcomings working with such a group, but one of our major strengths is our ability to imagine. We are capable of beginning with a vision or an idea and then working through the problem solving processes necessary to bring this vision to fruition.

At the recent Board of Directors meeting in Providence we had an open and wide ranging discussion concerning the past and future of *Metalsmith* magazine. We realize the magazine is at a juncture with a new editor and new Editorial Advisory Committee and we felt it was important to elucidate for them, ourselves and the membership, qualities which would allow *Metalsmith* to continue to develop as an exemplary publication.

First and foremost, we thought *Metalsmith* should recognize and acknowledge excellence within the fields of jewelry design and metalsmithing in whatever forms it is manifested. We felt that documentation was not as important as asking questions, creating dialogue and stimulating excitement about art and jewelry.

We discussed the idea of timeliness and agreed that editorial content should address current and substantial issues affecting not only metalsmiths and jewelry designers but other areas of art and design. We want to encourage an expansive editorial perspective, one that will interest a large and thoughtful audience by considering social, political, and economic issues that impact our lives as artists and creators. Editorial expansion can be accomplished by encouraging a wide range of authors and by soliciting articles from persons whose interests are tangential to our field. The readership of *Metalsmith* can only benefit by broadening the base of authors and moving away from the limitations imposed by metalsmiths writing about metalsmiths.

We also applied the concept of excellence to the magazine itself. As a visually oriented group we have the ability to imagine a magazine that excels in every way. Graphic design, quality of printing and paper, layout of editorial content and advertising, and a sense of each issue working as a cohesive unit are all concerns that can benefit from attention and focus.

Underlying our point of view is the assumption that if we produce an outstanding magazine the audience we attract will be the audience we desire. Rather than design a magazine with a preconceived readership, we propose a magazine that will attract its own following.

The board would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ginny Croft for her tenure as interim editor. In a gracious and professional manner she played a vital role in allowing a smooth transition to a new editor for *Metalsmith.*

We would like to welcome Frank C. Lewis as the new editor of *Metalsmith* magazine. Frank was selected from a group of superb candidates at the conference in Providence, Rhode Island. He comes to *Metalsmith* with an outstanding academic and editorial background. Frank received an MA degree in contemporary art from the University of Chicago and later taught art history at several institutions including The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, and the University of Chicago. Paralleling his teaching experience he has been a practicing art critic and was a founding editor of *Art Muscle* in 1986.

We are fortunate in having a select and professional team working on our magazine: Frank C. Lewis as editor, Mary Melilli and Richard Mehl as our graphic designers, Bob Mitchell in charge of advertising, and Sam Shaw as Production Coordinator.

— Douglas Steakley

Metalsmith

THE JOURNAL OF THE
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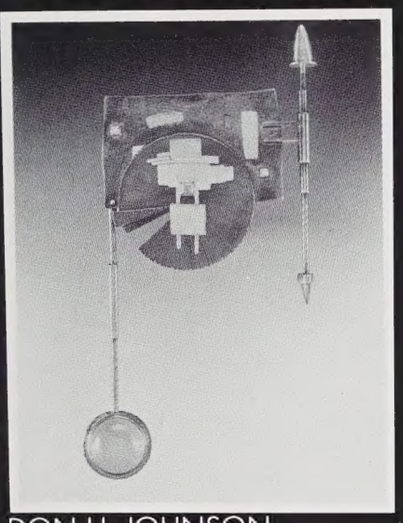

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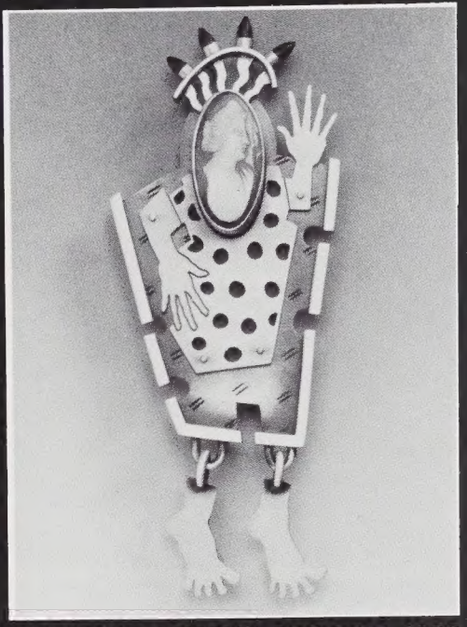

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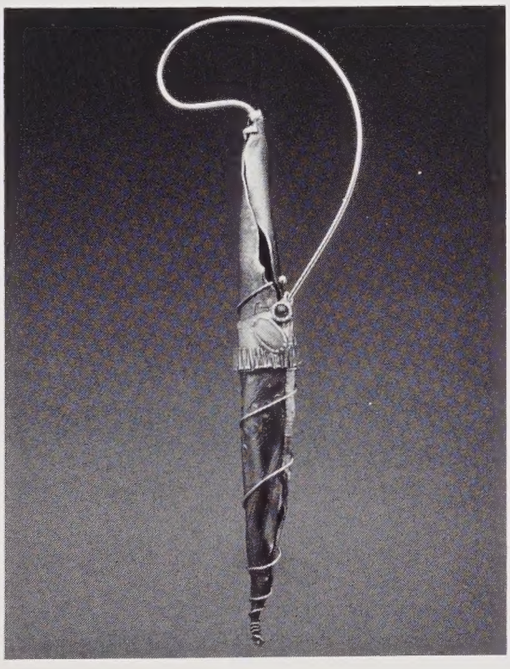

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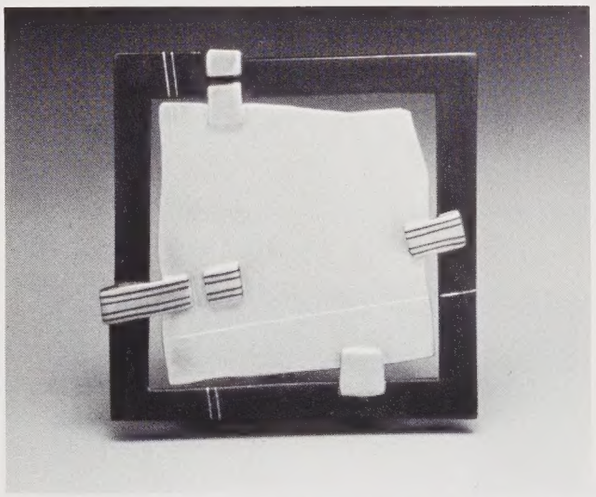

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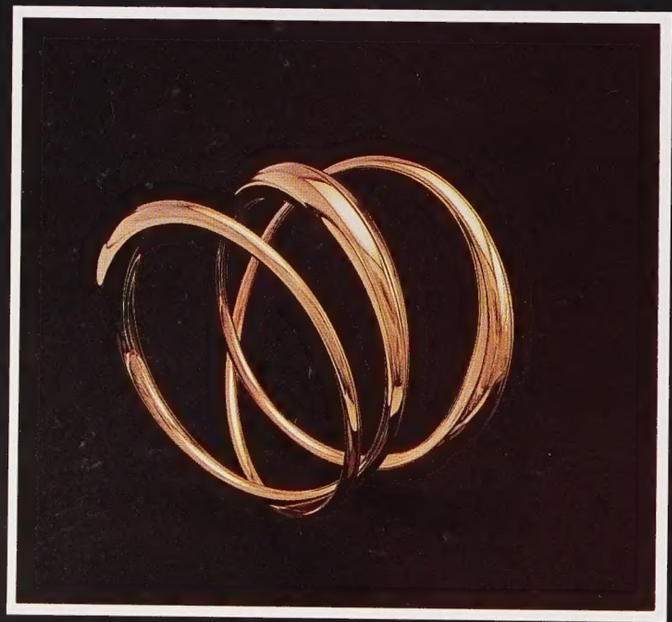

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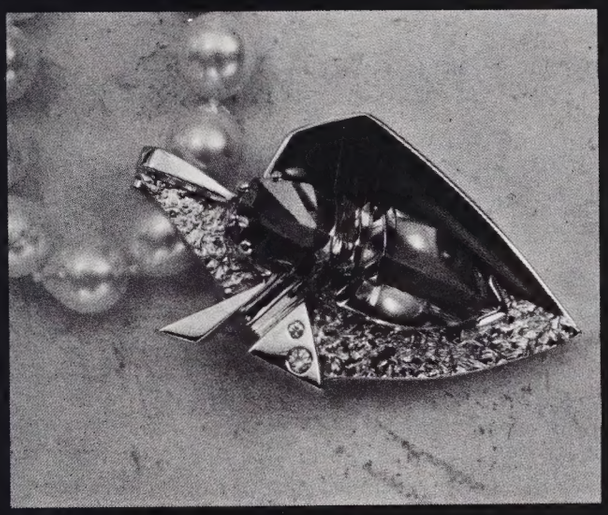

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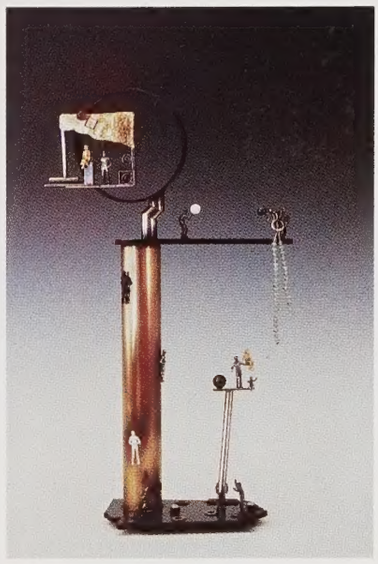

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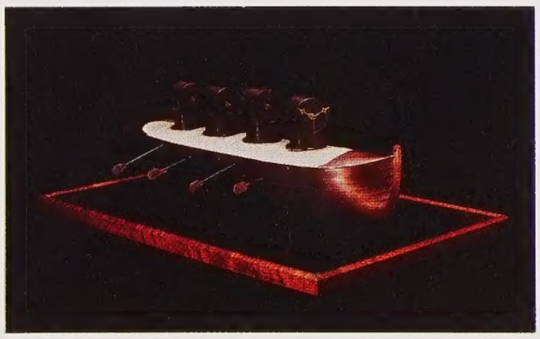

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Beyond the Bench

by Tim McCreight

There are few faster ways to clear a room than to invite a conversation about the difference between Art and Craft. Not only are these conversations tedious and unproductive, but they generally work from the defensive premise that one camp is better than the other. It's possible to get so preoccupied with the discussion and its polemics that we overlook other assumptions that are lying just beneath the surface. One of these assumptions is that all art can be tossed into a single class, with a single set of prinicpals and expectations. And isn't that silly?

When we define the visual arts as inclusive of "objects made with attention to their appearance" we can begin to make further distinctions about the relationships these works have with their viewers. The artist working with a large canvas assumes a certain relationship between object and viewer before the first mark is made. And, more to the point, the marks to come will be influenced by an awarenesss of this relationship. Jewelry is not different because it is Craft, but because it is intrinsically in a unique relationship to its viewer. So unique, in fact, that the word viewer no longer suffices and we replace it with "wearer."

In most cases the work of an artist is influenced by a specific, identifiable stimulus. This may often be money and that is fine. Doctors, lawyers and teachers do what they do for money, too. Michelangelo and Cellini worked for the patronage of popes and kings and they were, by and large, happy to get the work.

For most of us, the stimulus to work is less dramatic. For instance, we are commissioned by a neighbor to make a pin for an upcoming birthday; we make a dozen service pins for the local choir and, by and large, we're happy to get the work. In the case of a commission, it's natural to consider the relationship involved. When Mr. X calls about a gemstone ring as an anniversary gift for his wife, most jewelers will easily turn the conversation to questions regarding her tastes in jewelry and what he has in mind. It is clear to all that the relationship has three players: maker, giver, and wearer.

I wonder, however, if I am sufficiently aware of this relationship when the conditions of a specific commission have not been imposed upon me. Even when I'm making a "personal" piece for inclusion in an exhibition, I'd like to think that the piece will eventually find its way into someone's life. I know I don't want the piece to live forever in the gallery showcase, but I wonder if I design with this other life in mind. Simply put, is my work so full of me that there is no room for someone else to get into it? When people describe a piece of jewelry that is meaningful in their life, I usually hear about friendship rings and costume jewelry with personal attachments. In many cases it is clear that the preciousness has come along after the work was made and I wonder if a piece that is crowded with personal messages from the maker will allow this kind of accretion to occur.

If the logical extension of this line of thought is that we should work harder to make our jewelry commonplace, then I cancel the idea. But I don't think it has to be interpreted this way. Instead I remind myself that design may operate on a level of considerably more subtlety than the one I take for granted. We commonly think of design as an arrangement of shapes. Definitions will vary but they usually involve words like texture, rhythm, form, color, harmony, contrast, and so on. And physically this is correct. When we discuss the look of a piece, these are the most useful terms to describe it. My point here, though, is to say that perhaps designs, like poetry, are best when they allow – or even require – completion from the reader or wearer. Knowing this, I will work less on making my personal statement clear ("Let me tell you about my life") and more on capturing the abstract and shared qualities of life.

One of the great contributions of contemporary studio jewelry is the personal nature of much of the work. Somewhat like the Impressionist painters of the late nineteenth century, contemporary jewelry artists draw upon personal experience as subject matter thus expanding the relevance and impact of their art. It would be a great loss if this movement were to disappear. But it seems relevant to note that the vast history of adornment is one of complex relationships in which the maker and the object are in a unique relationship to the site and context of the work. I hope that my design process honors this tradition and the complex possibilities it offers.

Tim McCreight is head of the metalsmithing and jewelry department at the Maine College of Art.

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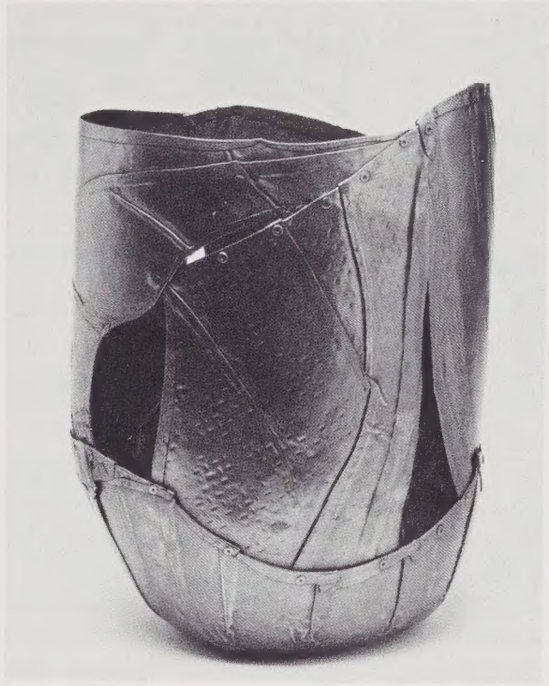

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Recent Sightings

by Bruce Metcalf

Express Yourself

Ideology controls thought. All too often, we uncritically accept propositions as if they were true, and examine neither the history nor the logic of such "truths." Unexamined assumptions mutate into myths, and we blindly navigate through life and art using these myths as beacons. From proposition to truth to myth, ideas sometimes evolve to the point where they finally pervade every aspect of thought and action.

Recently, I conducted an experiment in a college-level jewelry class. In a questionnaire, I asked the students what they thought the purpose of art was. Without exception, they answered that art is a form of expression, and most specified it to be self-expression. Amazing! In the art school subculture, where students pride themselves for their nonconformity, here was a total uniformity of opinion. One theory of art has achieved such power and status that it is accepted without question, as if it was a natural fact. We breathe air. We will die someday. Art is self-expression. Yet, the class knew neither that expressionism is only one of several competing theories of art, nor were they aware that it is, historically, a fairly recent theory.

Expressionism in the visual arts is rooted in the Romantic movement of the 18th century. Broadly, expression in an artwork has three aspects: as representation of an emotion experienced by the artist; as communication of feeling between artist and her audience; and as an art object embodying an emotion. In each case, reference to subjective emotion is essential and some degree of communication between artist and public is implicit. The first case focuses on the artist as a vessel of emotion, although it is generally accepted that the feeling in question is not necessarily experienced at the moment of creation. (Sustaining a single emotion for the duration of making a piece of jewelry would be well-nigh impossible, for instance.) The second case assumes that empathy between audience and artist is essential, and aesthetic pleasure is primarily a matter of identifying with the artwork. The third case presupposes either a natural or a socially determined code for reading emotion, and claims the artwork consists of a language of marks that serve as a physical manifestation of feeling.

The Romantic era was especially interested in genius and inspiration. The artist, it was held, was a sensitive creature blessed with an extraordinary gift of perception (which the Greeks claimed was attainable only by divine madness) and feeling (now debased to the idea of "talent"). Theoretically, the artist has access to imaginings and feelings that the normal person is incapable of experiencing. The value of art lies in experiencing, vicariously, the highly refined sensitivity of the gifted artist. In context, this theory implies that the artist is not tied to representing immediate physical objects, but can imagine scenes that more vividly express her emotion. Seeing the artist as a receptacle of singular, emotional sensitivity turned attention away from rules of ideal beauty, and toward her subjective condition.

But still, the feelings expressed in worthy art were supposed to be beyond the capability an ordinary person's direct perception. The theory assumes the genius of the artist to see and feel things that the rest of us are denied. Art, then, becomes an instrument by which the audience experiences the artist's subjective feeling-state, and it can be judged by the efficiency by which it communicates those feelings.

My students knew nothing of this. For them, expression was a simple matter: they feel something, and then stuff it into a bag called "art". No further questions were ever asked. For most, their emotions did not even need to be communicated. Instead, art was mostly a matter of externalizing feeling, and no concern was given to their audience. Some students bristled when I suggested that, because their expression was strictly a private matter, they could be easily misunderstood. Having expressed themselves, they were utterly unconcerned what anybody else might think. And I certainly didn't have the heart to suggest that their feelings were not very different from any of their peers'. Disgust with shopping malls or anger at mom & dad were hardly emotions their audience were incapable of experiencing without the inspiration and talent of the artist. All my students trusted that their experience, even if it was ordinary as mud, would be magically transformed into art as soon as it was expressed. Questions of the quality or significance of their experience were never raised.

Nor did they understand that, in the history of art education, this emphasis on self-expression is very recent. Learning about art used to be a matter of aspiring to a specific and difficult goal, whether it be the imitation of natural form, the representation of beauty, or the rational redesign of the world. A century ago, an art student learned to draw from plaster casts of Greek and Roman statuary, in order to comprehend the standards of classical beauty. In the Bauhaus, students learned principles of abstract composition and applied them to mass-production technologies, so that the future worker's paradise would be inexpensive, efficient, and hygienic. Personal emotions did not enter into either system. In almost every age but our own, an absolute trust in subjectivity as method and justification for making art would have been utter nonsense. It has only been since the ascendancy of American "action painting", with its emphasis on gesture, accident, and the ostensible heroic struggle of the painter, that the outpouring of emotion has taken center stage in art education.

My students seemed to think that self-expression is the beginning and end of art. They were willing to learn technique, but mostly because they believed more skill would afford more efficiency in expressing their feelings. Learning composition and color theory was less compelling, because most could not understand how these skills would help. They were obviously unimpressed when I suggested that other theories might be more reasonable, or that numerous historical contexts exist for their work. What did that stuff have to do with feeling? For them, the circle was already complete: having expressed themselves, any considerations of larger meanings were irrelevant.

I do not condemn the expression of feeling. In fact, I believe that every student must come to grips with her feelings, and learn to express them. Feeling is the most direct and honest of subject matters. But personal emotion should serve as a platform for engagement with the rest of the world. I cannot believe that the central purpose of art (or craft) is self-expression. It is altogether too self-centered, too self-serving. It's an interminable extension of the "Me decade", wherein anything beyond our immediate emotional grasp merits scant attention. Visual art used to be the primary vehicle for communicating shared perceptions about society, art, life, and cosmology. Art underlined the connections between the individual and the larger world. But this profound emphasis we now place on the self, and its every emotional tremor, diminishes the power of art to speak to others. The kind of expressionism my students believed is a theory become myth, and a myth grown crazy. Uncritical adherence to this myth results in a starved, poverty-striken art. Isn't it time to turn away from the self, and start to attend to the world?

Bruce Metcalf writes a regular column for Metalsmith.

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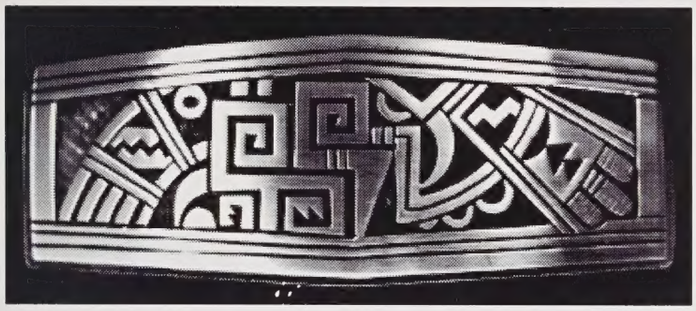

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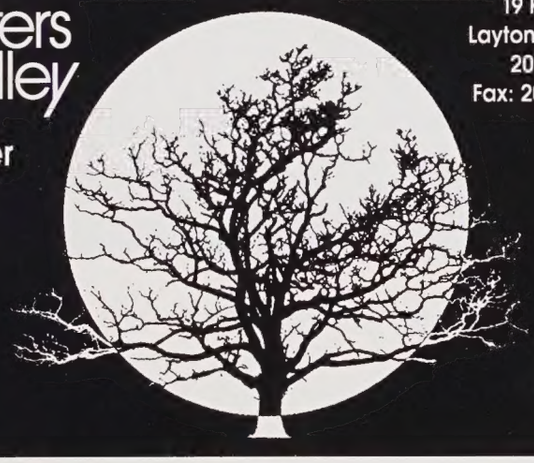

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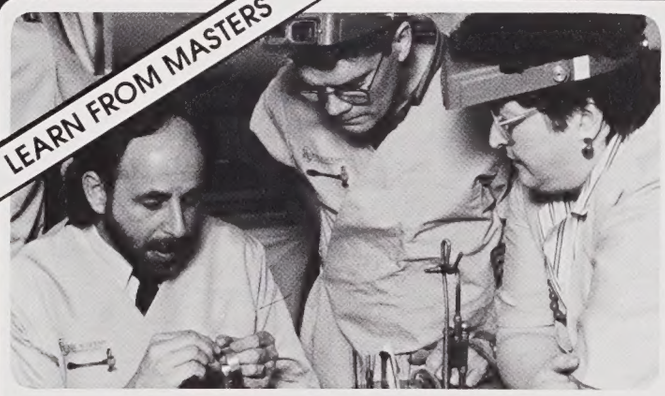

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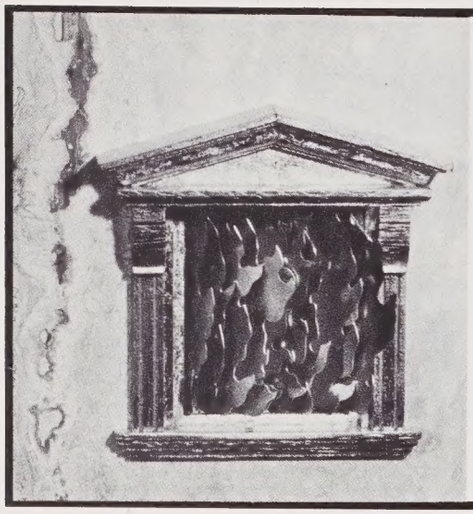

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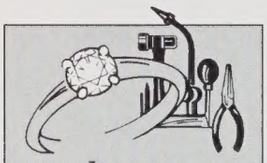

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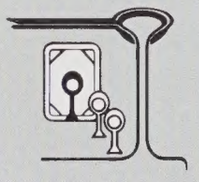

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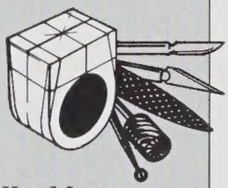

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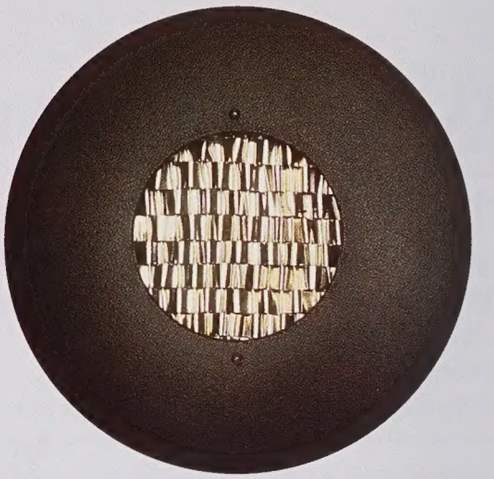
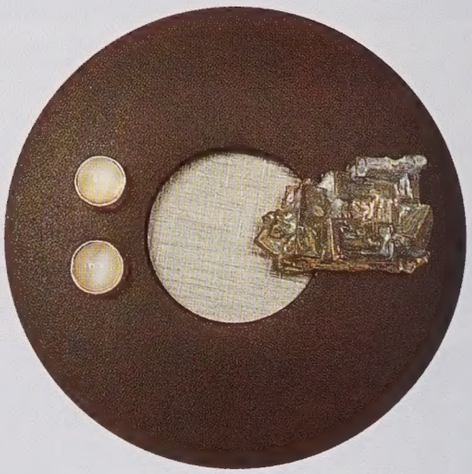




Objects of Contemplation

Helen Mason

by J. Susan Issacs

The sculpture of Helen Mason raises many important issues in twentieth-century art: the relationship between craft and fine art, the role of materials and scale, the artist's view of her work and her place in modern society, and the function of the public in response to the artist's work. Mason's art is created in two distinct and very different sizes, that of indoor, human scale sculpture and that of small, wearable pieces of art.[1] Since the artist creates work that crosses the traditional boundaries of fine art and craft, of non-functional and functional, the parameters of art are pushed and tested in her work. Distinguishing between fine art and craft is complex, and Helen Mason's small work, her jewelry, is constructed with the same physical and metaphorical properties that she gives to her large scale sculpture; thus making the distinction not one of craft/fine art, but one of scale/presence.

Mason was trained in the fine arts, first as a painter, and later as a sculptor/metalsmith. Because of this strong background she has always seen herself as a sculptor working on small scale objects, even in work that is meant to serve a function, such as jewelry. From the beginning her paintings reflected her interest in abstraction, and they were a clear indication that abstraction would be the direction her work would always follow. Raising three children and teaching necessitated a long maturation process in her artistic development and during this time Mason moved from painting to sculpture, earning a B.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design and an M.F.A. from the University of Delaware. Her earliest three-dimensional works were direct carvings in stone but the processes of additive construction intrigued her and she began to work in clay. She quickly began to add other materials to the clay and ultimately started using mixed materials in all of her pieces, incorporating various metals as well as rubber and Teflon.[2]

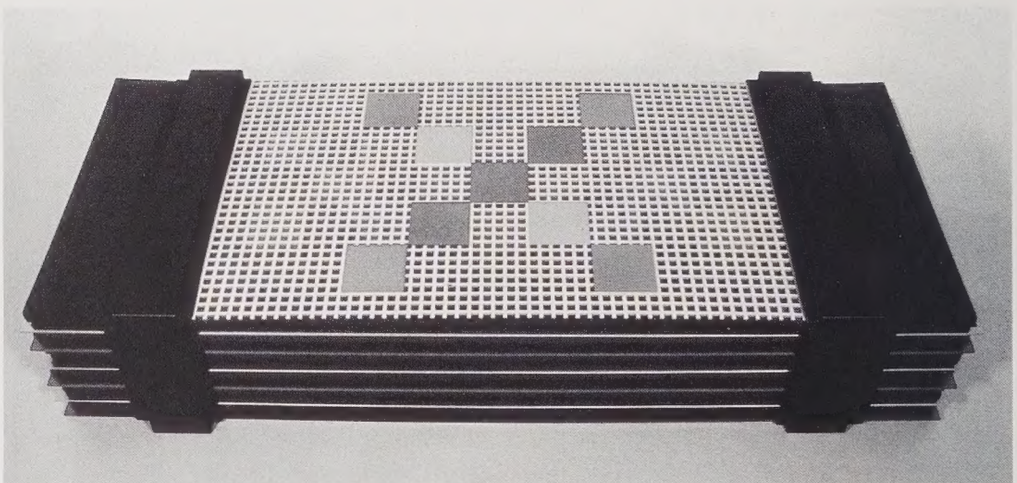
Following a 1989 exhibition at the Delaware Art Museum, which included tabletop pieces and free-standing floor sculptures, the artist decided to work in a scale that allowed her to be solely and completely in control, without the help of studio assistants.[3] This desire for independence and absolute command is not difficult to understand when viewing Mason's sculpture. Each work is self-contained, uncompromising, and singular. The most recent body of small, intimate, and wearable objects reiterates the artist's desire to be in complete charge of the creation and fabrication of her work.[4] Now, instead of making life-size pieces, Mason uses the human body as part of the sculpture. Human scale, once obtained through free standing sculpture, is achieved when the jewelry is worn and becomes functional. Mason believes the human body acts not only as a pedestal but also as a mobile armature, and that there is a spiritual relationship between the work and the person wearing it. Furthermore, as a sculptor, she is searching for new ways to make three-dimensional forms for the body that will be an extension of the physical presence of the person adorned.[5]

Brooch (FAR LEFT)
sterling silver, 24K gold, marble
6 x 1¼″
Photo: Rick Echelmeyer

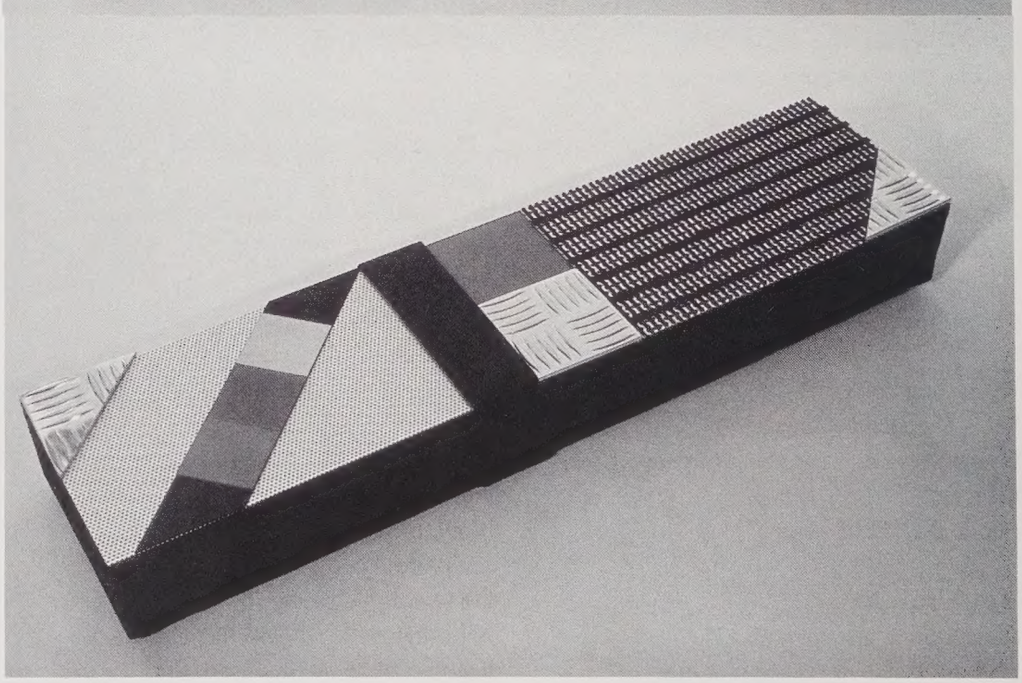
Brooch (TOP LEFT)
Teflon, sterling silver, rubber
3¼ x 3¼″
Photo: Bobby Hanson

Brooch (CENTER LEFT)
Teflon, anodized aluminum,
bismuth crystal, moonstones, rubber
2¼ x 2¼″
Photo: Rick Echelmeyer

Brooch (BOTTOM LEFT)
sterling silver, 24K gold,
Chilean crystal, natural pearl, rubber
2¼ x 2¼″
Photo: Bobby Hanson



Horizontal Bundle
anodized aluminum, rubber
30 x 12 x 12″



Wrappings II
clay, anodized aluminum, rubber
28 x 6¼ x 3″

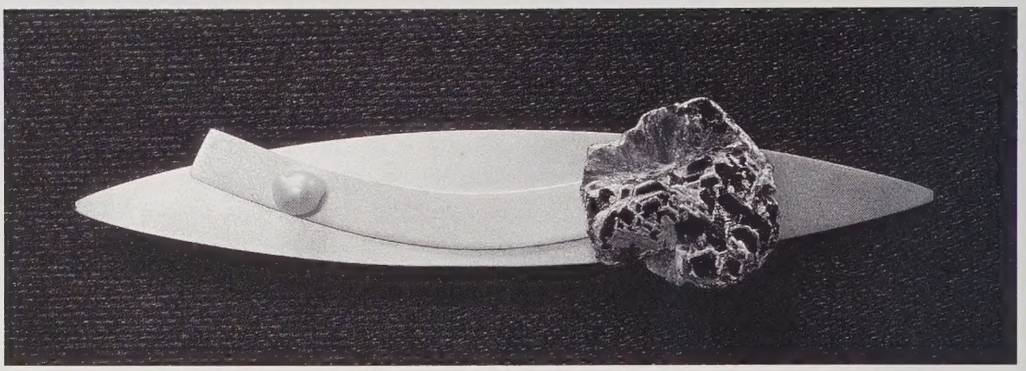
Diagonal Bundle (BELOW)
anodized aluminum, polyvinyl, rubber
14 x 14 x 48″

Not suprisingly, there are many of the same images and themes running through both the small and the large works. The color black continues to play an important role and many of the forms remain layered, bundled, gathered, and folded. These constructs, among others, are an extension of a theme that runs through all of the artist's oeuvre. Mason also uses materials in the smaller pieces that are the same as the media in her larger works: rubber, Teflon, anodized aluminum, and found industrial goods. Thus, not only has the artist continued her explorations of theme and content with the small works, she also continues her use of many of the same forms and media.

In regards to the traditional distinctions between the fine arts and the crafts it is virtually impossible to separate the recent body of small work from that produced earlier. In fact, the artist categorically states that she does not think in these terms and the new work is obviously connected to past bodies of work.[6] For Helen Mason, as for many others, the distinction between functional and non-functional art no longer defines the differences between craft and fine art. Moreover, craftsmanship, the idea that technique is important, is a part of both the artist's small and large pieces. The intellectual process and the physical construction of Mason's jewelry remain linked to that of her sculpture, and she thinks of her works in terms of big and small, not fine art and craft.

This lack of definition and the blurring of the lines of demarcation between fine art and craft is not unique to the work of Mason and is a distinct part of the post-modern world. But the roots of this philosophy can be traced in Mason's oeuvre to her strong foundation in Minimalism. The coolness and detachment of minimalist art, in both its forms and use of industrial materials, has been noted by many critics and scholars.[7] The use of standard, fabricated materials unites sculpture, a "high" art form, with industrial manufacturing. This particular idea can even be traced as far back as Dada in the early twentieth century. However, the Minimalist artists combined the aesthetics of a modern world: reduction, simplification, and lack of adornment, with the materials of a modern world. Within this method there is careful attention given to balance and symmetry, and because of the reduction of forms every element in a design is of absolute importance. Similar to much Minimalist work, Mason's art is three-dimensional. Of equal importance is the fact that Mason is concerned with simplification and the reduction of forms. With the creation of every work the artist asks: "How can I take something more away?"[8] In Minimalism this extreme simplification removed the personal touch or "hand" of the artist and situated the resulting object within the territory of the impersonal and the anonymous. This characteristic also denies any quality of preciousness in the completed work.

This is not to suggest that Mason has simply appropriated Minimalist forms and ideology. She has not remained an artist trapped in the sixties, but has continually sought to experiment with new materials and new ideas. Her long-standing interest in, and association with, the arts of Japan has added a unique dimension to her work. The artist considers her desire for simplification to be connected with both Minimalism and the art and culture of Japan. She wrote: "My contact and relationship with Japanese culture has influenced me – I am constantly searching for solutions that simplify."[9] Specifically, while Mason may borrow elements of design from Minimalist art, she also incorporates the mystery and drama of the East. The artist sees her use of the color black as both symbolic and dramatic and her interest in bundles, knots, and tubes as derived as much from the art of Japan as from the forms of the modern industrial world. With her unusual vision she understands the intertwining of art and life that is ever present in Japan and looks to promote the same kind of vision in America, through her fascination with and use of found objects and industrial forms and materials.



A confluence of East and West appears in Mason's work. She is not only intrigued by the forms of Japanese art and the very Western ideas of Minimalism, but she sees a point in space where the forms and ideologies of these two distinctly different cultural forces intersect. She wants to take Japanese forms and make them more hard edged.[10] The simplicity and elegance found in functional objects from Japan attracts the artist at the same time that she finds inspiration in the materials of the modern industrial age. The reduction of form that is a part of the Japanese art reinforces her Western foundation in Minimalist sculpture.

There are other key aspects of Japanese art that inform Mason's work. For instance, in addition to the tubular shapes of the Samurai swords and the belts around the waists of the Sumo wrestlers, she is also fascinated by the complex textile patterns and designs that are a part of the rich, Japanese heritage. This imagery appears in her silk-screened, roller-printed, and etched metals and is more representative of the post-modern aesthetic of borrowing and homage than of Minimalism.

Texture and pattern are a consistent interest to the artist. In her small works Mason mixes the precious (gold, silver, and stones) with industrial materials, always searching for the means to imbue industrial materials with the same aesthetic values and rich qualities of gold and silver. Using Teflon, aluminum, rubber, and steel, in addition to precious metals, Mason layers, bundles, weaves, wraps, and knots carefully defined shapes and forms into controlled and minimal designs. Yet experimentation with new and unusual materials never interferes with her careful technical presentation. Although the quality of design is the most significant aspect of the small sculptures/jewelry, the technical virtuosity of their production, as in all of Mason's works, is impressive. Making Teflon appear rich requires many layers of color. The surface of one of the Teflon brooches, for example, is sleek and elegant, with no unnecessary details; the Teflon disc is seamlessly joined to gold, which is textured to look like an industrial material. Placed on top of the Teflon disk is a baroque stick pearl, while a natural pink pearl lays on top of the gold area. This combination of precious and non-precious materials is executed with careful attention, not only to the media, but also to the simplicity and elegance of the overall design. A typical characteristic of all of the artist's work is the reduction of form and an understanding of proportion and scale. Every detail is significant and none is superfluous. This careful and complete control of both design and materials is characteristic of the way in which the artist works to eliminate anything that would distract from the impact or power of the finished object.

Brooch (FAR LEFT)
sterling silver, 24K gold, marble, garnet
2¼ x 2¼″
Photo: Rick Echelmeyer

Brooch (TOP LEFT)
sterling silver, 24K gold,
muscovite, natural pearl
6 x 1¼″
Photo: Rick Echelmeyer

Knotted Neckpeice (ABOVE)
rubber, 9 x 10″
Photo: Bobby Hanson

Tublar Neckpeice (ABOVE RIGHT)
rubber, steel, 7 x 7″
Photo: Bobby Hanson

Some pieces are constructed of only one material, as in the neckpiece comprised of flat and tubular rubber. Recalling the large neck ornaments of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Mycenae, the pieces allude to the exquisite gold jewelry of these civilizations even though they are made of a modern industrial material. Thus not only has Mason imbued the rubber material with associations of precious materials, she also ties the work to history, while never allowing the work to loose its contemporary associations. This delicate balance of form and content is achieved through careful and specific aesthetic considerations and once again marks her connection to contemporary currents in art.

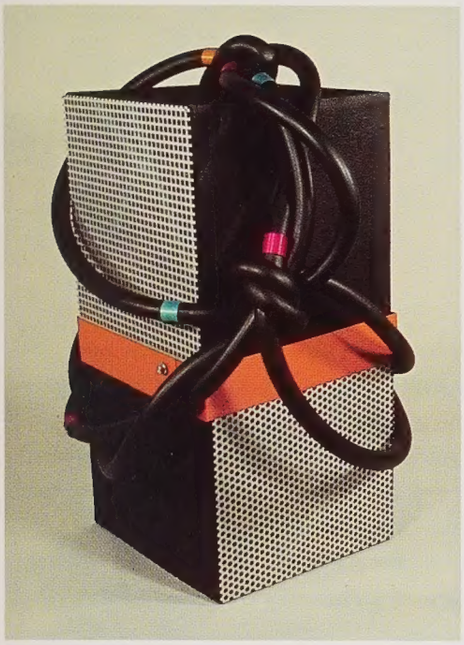
Although much of Mason's jewelry demands serious consideration, the bundled brooches of cinnamon sticks have a whimsical quality, due to both their material and the intriguing patterns silk-screened onto the anodized aluminum that encircles the bundles. Here the artist mixes industrial materials which are inorganic and hard with the sweet pungency and softness of the organic cinnamon. The patterns on the aluminum, like those in the earlier, larger works, are informed by the art of Japan.[11] Mason's interest in bundles and groupings of organic materials can, in part, be seen as reflective of the artist's love of Japanese gardens as well as the visual arts. Japanese gardens demonstrate a concern for the interwoven spirit of art and life. It is this aspect that Mason joins to her American experience of modern materials and forms: bundles of steel tubes, cables, wires, tires, rubber, and Teflon.

Mason also attributes her interest in allegorical themes to the East. She finds, for instance, that the color black has important associations for her. She believes it to be a color of mystery and one symbolic of the night, the time when she does much of her best work. It is also a color of elegance and quiet, a color that the artist feels is calming. In its quietness it sets the stage for the drama of the design.[12] Multiple layers of black are a recurring design element and have become closely associated with the artist, who dresses primarily in clothes of black and white.

The metaphorical elements of Mason's work clearly distinguishes it from Minimalism and connects it closely to more contemporary trends. Mason is quick to point out that her art depends not only upon formal elements but also upon content. Her attention to the relationship between wearer and object brings an element of controlled chance to the design; and this spiritual interconnectedness of object and wearer is completely unrelated to the cool detachment of pure Minimalism. Mason says, regarding the relationship between object and wearer: "It is the wearer who determines how the object should function, that when worn (the object) should be an extension of one's physical self and create an identity of its own. The nearness of the piece to the body, not its size, is the means by which jewelry can create a connection between the creator and the wearer."[13]

Three Bundles (BELOW)
cinamon, anodized, roller printed
and silkscreened aluminum, rubber
6 x 1″ (each)
Photo: Bobby Hanson

Wrappings III (RIGHT)
clay, anodized aluminum, rubber
11 x 12½ x 14″



There is a bond between audience and object in both the large and small works. In the large sculptures, the audience is apart from the work and must interact with the object from a distance. The nature of jewelry, however, requires a close and intimate relationship between wearer and object. Mason takes advantage of this symbiotic relationship by creating objects which are completed when they are placed upon the living armature. Yet although this last step must be taken to conclude a work, each object also functions independently from that armature, and like the large scale works, is carefully designed and produced with a high level of technical achievement. Believing that design is the most significant factor, with technical process following, the artist searches for new ways to make three-dimensional forms for the body that are an extension of one's physical self.

Over the last fifteen years of her career, Helen Mason has pursued several important paths in her work, always keeping a strong focus on design while searching for innovative ways to express ideas, and always with the desire to break boundaries. Ultimately, Mason's hope is to have works of jewelry accepted and honored as independent objects of art.[14]

J. Susan Isaacs is an art historian and critic residing in Wilmington Delaware.

NOTES

1. Helen Mason's large scale sculpture has been discussed in this journal before. See Betty Helen Longhi "Helen Mason: Form and Spirit," *Metalsmith,* Summer, 1989, page 47.

2. Many of Mason's ideas about her creative concepts and her materials were shared in a discussion with the author on Friday, August 21, 1992. It was during this discussion that the artist was asked not only about her aesthetic agenda, but also about her role as an artist and woman in today's society. Mason does not feel that her work is connected in its imagery to women's issues and she believes that her art is unrelated to the fact that she is female. However, she has stated that it is more difficult for women to find time to create art.

3. This 1989 exhibition at the Delaware Art Museum followed a twelve week sabbatical and an individual artist's grant to Japan in 1986. After extensive study and several years of work, the artist exhibited her large-scale pieces.

4. Mason's new work will be exhibited in 1993 at Jewelerswerk, in Washington D.C. and at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the American Craft Museum in New York City.

5. This statement was included in a body of handwritten notes entitled *Random Thoughts*, written by the artist in August of 1992.

6. The relationship between craft and fine art was discussed at great length with the author in the August 21 interview.

7. According to Dore Ashton, the earliest cohesive expression of the Minimalist aesthetic was the exhibition Primary Structures, at the Jewish Museum in 1966. The accompanying catalog essay by Kynaston McShine recognized the detachment and anonymity achieved by the artists through their use of reduced forms and industrial materials. Kynaston McShine, *Primary Structures* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966). Dore Ashton, *American Art Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982):108-09.

8. Interview, August 21, 1992.

9. These ideas are contained in some handwritten notes by the artist from August, 1992 that the artist gave to the author.

10. Interview, August 21, 1992.

11. In my conversation with the artist she discussed the source and inspiration for these patterns as inspired by the patterns on Japanese textiles and metalwork seen on her several trips to Japan, including her 1992 extended visit.

12. Interview, August 21, 1992.

13. This comment is included in Mason's formal 1992 "Artist's Statement." n.p.

14. Mason, "Random Thoughts." n.p.

As the only magazine of its kind, *Metalsmith* is many things to many people. In an effort to encourage not only excellence in practice and design but also to stimulate dialogue and critical thinking in the field of metalwork, we will on occasion print articles that focus less on individual practitioners and more on broader issues regarding: the history of the art form, questions about some of our basic assumptions about jewelry, and a far ranging discussion of ideas regarding the future of the field. This article is the first in a two part series investigating some of the history of metalwork and some ideas concerning the traditional and contemporary functions of jewelry.

The images reproduced herein are meant to serve not so much as illustrations of specific points but rather as examples of the variety of contemporary metalwork and its approaches. These images are also a representative sampling of some of the works of jewelry recently donated to the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Art in Racine, Wisconsin, by Karen Johnson Boyd. We can only hope that a gift of such scope and aesthetic importance bodes well for both the Wustum and other public collections throughout the country. Whenever collections of metalwork achieve their well deserved place in museums and galleries everyone in the field will benefit.

On the Nature *of Jewelry*

BY BRUCE METCALF

As a part-time jeweler and a full-time teacher, I occasionally wonder where the boundaries of jewelry lay, and what aesthetic potential the field offers. Unfortunately, intelligent writing on jewelry is scarce, and the vast amount of theorizing about painting and sculpture offers little of real value, as the basic agenda of the traditional "fine arts" does not really confront the issues properly belonging to jewelry. To date, most writing on Jewelry has stressed design, craftsmanship, and physical usefulness, with a few efforts directed toward expanding the familiar definitions of the art. But I have come to believe that Jewelry, more than most other disciplines in the visual arts, is characterized by social and psychological utility. The personal uses to which adornment is put suggests an aesthetic possibility that few observers have noticed: Jewelry has the ability to touch people.

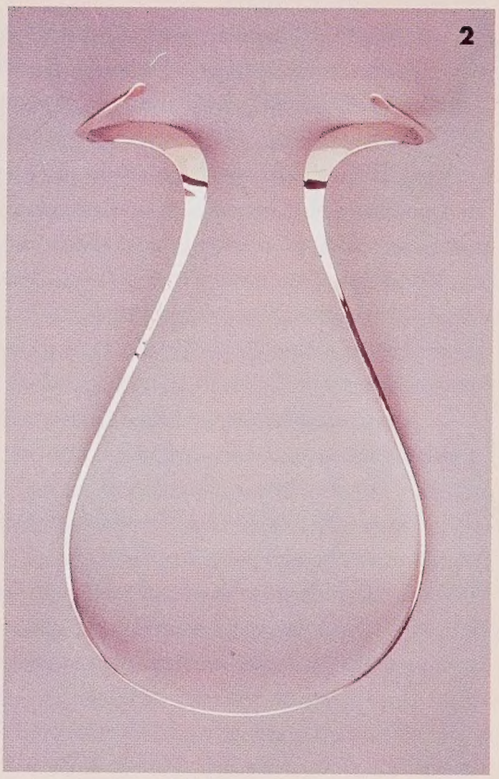
Jewelry has been produced by almost every known society since the beginning of culture. Seeking an exact definition of the term "jewelry" is a bit of a futile exercise, perhaps, but one hopes the effort will shed new light on the subject. Unfortunately, while it's possible to define chemical elements like "carbon", or rigorous constructs like an "equilateral triangle" with some precision, terms in the arts defy accurate elucidation. Such terms are invariably messy and vague. Critics and theorists have been arguing for centuries about the exact meaning of "painting" or "sculpture", and one generation's answers disintegrate as the next generation looks at the questions anew. No doubt, getting a firm grasp on the idea of jewelry is equally difficult.

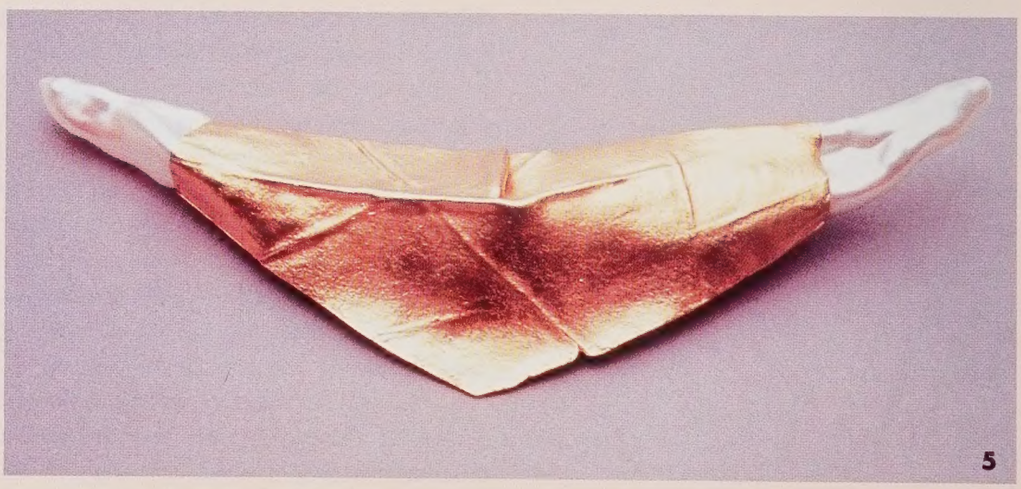
While attempting to define the field, I have found it useful to investigate the vast production of historical jewelry. By examining earlier works, especially the adornment employed in pre-literate cultures, and by scrutinizing contemporary western jewelry objects, one is able to compile a list of qualities and functions that together help to define both the form and the practice. The definition is loose, of course, and some aspects may seem almost mutually exclusive. But in trying to define an enormous body of work, one should probably be excused for some imprecision.

Initially, it seems that jewelry falls between sculpture on one side and garments on the other. Like sculpture, most jewelry consists of a physical object that has its own discrete existence. Some jewelers even intend their work to be viewed isolated from the human body. But unlike most sculpture, jewelry is also inextricable from the presence of a living person: most jewelry is made to be worn, or to be imagined being worn. So, like garments, the site of jewelry is the body. However, unlike garments, jewelry is rarely made to protect people from heat, cold, precipitation, and the gaze of our neighbors. Yet, the line between garments and jewelry can still be vague. Certainly garments can be metal – chain mail, for instance – and jewelry can be made of fiber. Similarly, the scale and the enveloping quality of garments have become the province of some jewelers: Caroline Broadhead's veils and Susanna Heron's hats come to mind. So, jewelry occupies a territory between sculpture and garments, overlapping both to a considerable degree, but also maintaining a distinct identity.

Traditionally, jewelry is made to be attached to the body or to clothing. Some types conform to the anatomy, as in rings, bracelets, necklaces, head-dresses, and the like. Other types of jewelry are designed to be fixed to garments, as in pins, penannular brooches, and buttons. Some varieties demand alteration of the body itself, as in earrings for pierced ears, nose ornaments, and lip plugs or labrets. A vast array of other forms remain, (hairpins, combs, barrettes, pasties, pocket watches, etc.) but the common element is that they are all fastened to the human form.

As far as we know, jewelry has always been used to decorate the human figure. The word "decoration" may seem pejorative in certain purified regions of modernism, but I use the term without any negative overtones. In formal terms, the decorative function of jewelry has been to provide visual accents, color, contrast, and texture, as well as to focus attention to specific parts of the body. In these senses, jewelry serves as a compositional device in the layout of the human form.





1 Didi Suydam
Ray Brooch
sterling silver, 14K gold leaf, bloodstone, 1989

2 Ronald Pearson
Matching Curves Neckband
forged sterling silver, 1985

3 Susan Kingsley
Bracelet
titanium and copper, 1984

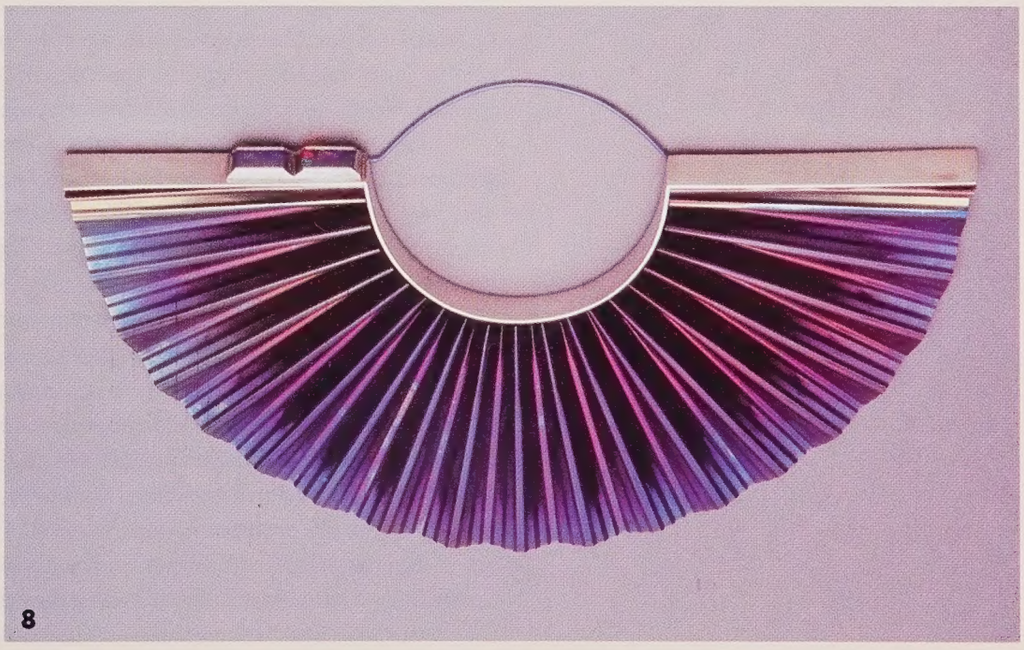
4 Svetozar Radakovich
Untitled Neckpiece 8G
sterling silver, 18K gold, 1975

5 Ken Loeber
Untitled Brooch
14K gold, baroque pearls, 1984

6 Earl Pardon
Necklace / Earrings set
sterling silver, 14K gold, aquamarine, amethyst, topaz, enamel, mother of pearl, abalone shell, 1990

7 Eleanor Moty
Untitled Choker
sterling silver, 14K gold, amethyst crystals and agate, 1974

8 Arline Fisch
Fan Brooch
sterling silver, titanium, lapis lazuli, 1985



But the urge to decorate satisfies psychological purposes, too. Jewelry beautifies, within the value system of the local culture, and sometimes renders the wearer socially or sexually desirable. One cannot underestimate the power of jewelry to enhance self-image and to alter social perceptions. A caricature of this effect can be found in the prototypical disco-era "groovy guy", hoping to impress others of his ilk, with four or five strands of gold chains about his neck.

Yet, decoration can be more than the mindless application of gop. Especially in pre-literate cultures, most decoration is a carefully orchestrated collection of signs, each with particular meanings and overtones. When worn, jewelry constitutes a complex statement of social fact and personal fantasy, which other people in the same culture recognize and interpret. In spite of the devaluation that decoration has received from several generations of artists, critics, and teachers, personal ornamentation still exerts a subtle control on the coded message the wearer imparts. On the body, decoration has a subtext.

Probably the most significant subtext of jewelry is seen in how it marks social identity and status. Adornment has always been used to either distinguish from or merge the wearer with social groupings. The coded information that societies evolve for jewelry can be employed to make the wearer different from his neighbors, or the same. Military insignia do both, for instance. The stars that a general wears identify him as belonging to a particular branch of the armed forces (and thus the same as everyone else in the army), but they also indicate a high rank, placing him in a superior class to colonels, majors, and enlisted men. In civilian life, diamond rings and razor blades are equally coded. A large diamond announces wealth, while the razor blade declares the wearer to be of the punk demi monde. Diamonds at a country club indicate conformity and a bid for acceptance; but in the same place, razor blades hung around the neck would quite intentionally invite suspicion and raised eyebrows. In each case, jewelry is instantly recognized as a marker, a cipher in a language of signs.

Another traditional function of jewelry is to serve as a redeemable investment, a portable bank account. Women all over the world wear a substantial portion of their wealth in jewelry, which can be converted into goods and services should the need arise. In this way, jewelry is also a financial insurance policy guaranteeing the survival of a woman and her family in the event of her husband's death. For cultures without banking institutions, keeping wealth attached to the body offers a convenient alternative to a savings account. One suspects the form is also a safeguard against theft: a woman could always protest loudly when her investment was being stolen, and the small scale of jewelry allows such wealth to be easily hidden.

For as long as we know of, jewelry has been associated with the spiritual and the supernatural. Amulets and talismans appear in every culture, offering magical power and protection to the wearer. Sacred symbols are frequently made portable, as in crucifixes, stars of David, or Islamic protective hands. In these cases, the object of jewelry is a condensed symbol for an entire cosmology, summarizing the relation between God and human. The intimate contact between symbol and skin, as jewelry is worn, becomes a constant reminder of one's faith, and the promise of security and salvation.

Each of the above mentioned functions partially defines jewelry. Most ornament, however, fulfills several functions simultaneously, setting up a layering of use and meaning that can be confusing and contradictory. And in spite of all of our technical sophistication, westerners still use jewelry for much the same reasons as the most "primitive" of African tribesmen.

I have, so far, outlined five functions that traditionally have defined jewelry: attachment to the body, personal decoration, displaying socially meaningful codes, serving as portable and redeemable wealth, and mediation with the spiritual. But, I also think that other constants exist in the history of jewelry.

One such constant is the astonishingly wide variety of material employed in making jewelry. The idea that metal is the medium of choice for adornment is a rather narrow Western European view, sanctified by tradition and education. Even in Europe, stone, wood, glass beads, leather, animal horn, coal, and human hair, among other materials, have been applied to jewelry making. A cursory study of non-Western cultures reveals an even greater range: feathers, clay, cloth, straw, lacquer, shell, and dozens of other materials have all been used for adornment. The rebel jewelers of the early 1980's who disdained metal shocked only those who discounted or ignored the world history of jewelry.

Additionally, the majority of jewelry is caught up in issues regarding sensual and sexual appeal. The basic impulse for decorating the body has always been connected to a bid for acceptability, trying to be secure and likable. The powerful human desire to *belong* is a basic motivation for the use of jewelry, and one of the means to that end has always been to *look* as good as possible. Every society, of course, has its own standards as to what looks good, but a common thread is found in sensual and sexual appeal. The shine of polished metal and the glitter of faceted gemstones on wedding rings are typical of the seductive allure of jewelry. In the yaake dance of the Wodaabe tribe of Niger, young men adorn themselves to accentuate the local standards of masculine beauty: straight noses, white eyes and teeth, and slender bodies. During the dance, young women can choose the man they find most attractive, and they later discretely spend the night together. Just as in your average pick-up bar, good looks pay off.

On the other hand, playing into the sexual appeal of fine jewelry can reinforce unfortunate, stereotypical roles for women. In most societies, women have long been regarded as sexual objects, not as complete human beings (see *Metalsmith,* Volume 11, Number 3). Since women are still the primary users of jewelry, one must question whether jewelry reinforces the idea of women as yet another possession, or an equal partner in the social process. I don't know what the answer is, but if jewelry is to stress sexual allure, it must also maintain the dignity of men and women alike, and refuse to treat women as amusing sex objects. Perhaps the younger generation is now or will be more sensitive to the way social codes (of which jewelry is one) can reinforce role stereotypes.

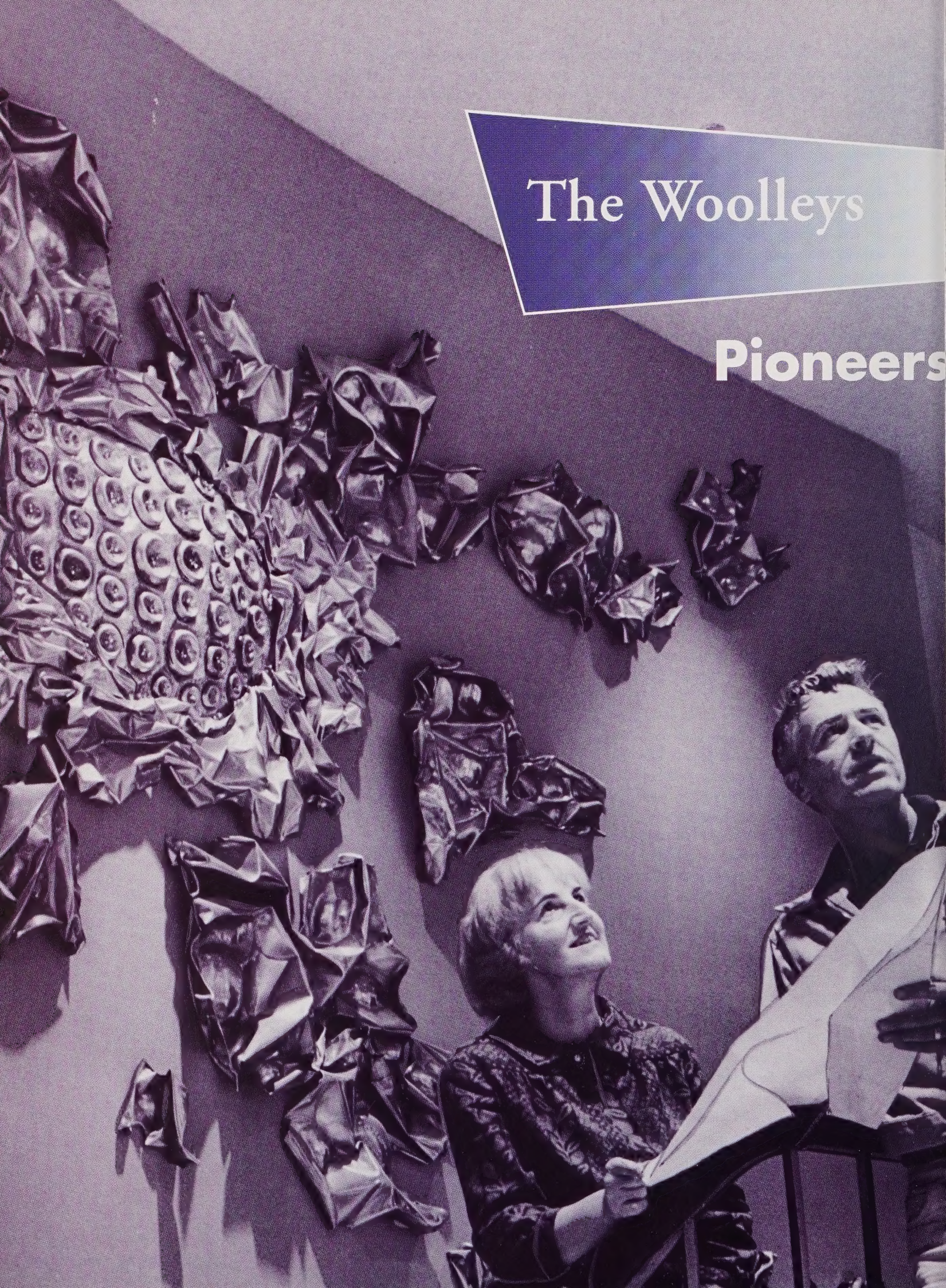
While this discussion has concentrated on the traditional functions and qualities of jewelry, please do not think that I am advocating a slavish adherence to convention. To the contemporary practitioner, the past can be a rich and valuable resource, as well as an inspiration. Unfortunately, the modernist view holds that tradition creates stagnation and repression. (As if in agreement, the word "tradition" appears as a synonym for "oldness" and "decline" in my copy of *Roget's Thesaurus.*) The early modernists struggled against a system of art and thought that was intolerant of fresh, new ideas. To thinkers such as Adolph Loos and Walter Gropius, the ridiculous and restrictive rules promoted by the academies and the powerful critics of the time proved that all tradition had to be discarded. The modernist distaste for historical reference came from a confusion between self-righteous academicism and the authentic lineage of the past. Quite contrary to Loos and Gropius, tradition should be preserved because it allows for variation and invention within structured continuity.

The trick is to regard tradition not as a collection of ironbound rules, but as a loose structure that allows room for creative movement. It may be a typically European misunderstanding to regard tradition as simply dogma. A close look at any pre-literate or ancient culture will reveal that tradition in the visual arts allowed for ongoing, organic changes. It also allowed for considerable variation and personal invention. At first glance, a Western observer may think that all the patterns in non-western or tribal cultures are identical, and thus every individual within those societies must be the prisoner of custom. But a more concentrated look reveals that within a group or tribal style there is also divergence. Further study reveals that these styles gradually evolved and continue to evolve, reflecting changes in community and environment. Clearly, pre-literate peoples regarded tradition as a framework and a starting-point, not as a rule book to follow blindly.

My point is this: the traditions of jewelry can be honored and understood, but not taken as holy writ. The history of jewelry is far older than the history of painting, and far richer than the history of sculpture. Jewelry is firmly grounded in the human condition, and we are neither so enlightened nor so creative that we can afford to ignore the combined experience of hundreds of cultures and innumerable generations. At the same time, we must realize that not all lessons from the past are relevant today, and tradition can, and should, be tailored to fit present conditions.

... TO BE CONTINUED ...

Bruce Metcalf is a practicing metalsmith, lecturer, and critic.



The Woolleys

Pioneers

n Enamel

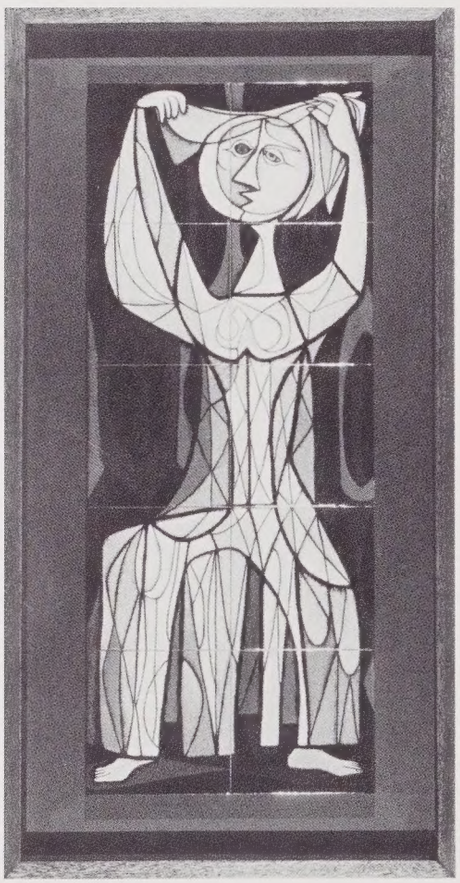
by Janice Keaffaber

Ellamarie and Jackson Woolley. The names are always said together, blended as if they were one person. Yet this visionary West Coast couple, who raised the art of enameling to national recognition, were distinct individuals. It was the unique force of their two personalities and talents that made the team work.

LEFT
Civic Theater mural (detail)
1965

ABOVE
Bibliocosmos mural (detail)
5½ x 32', 1959

Ellamarie Woolley
The Moon and I, 25 x 10", 1957



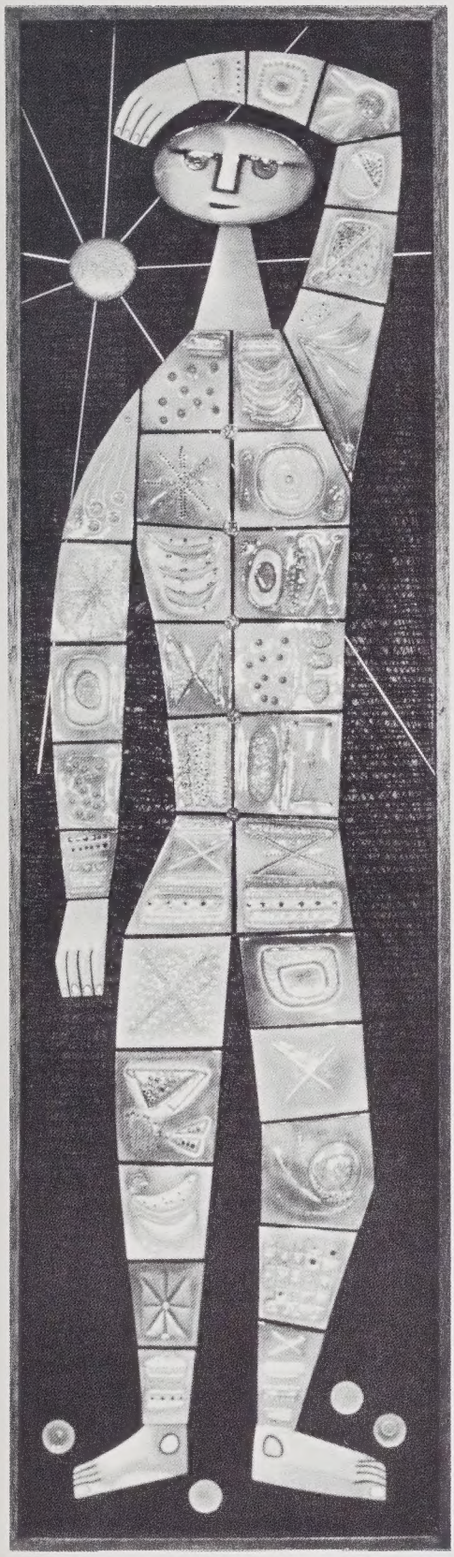
Ellamarie was quiet, preferring to remain in the background. Most would agree it was her artistic talent that had the greatest glow. Jackson had the traits of an actor, a flair for dramatic showmanship and he took the lead in bringing their work to the public eye. Toward the end of her life, Ellamarie won individual recognition with a National Endowment for the Arts grant which allowed her creative power the freedom to explode into new areas. Jackson served on the board of the American Crafts Council. There is no question that they would each have achieved distinction in their individual careers. Together, however, they forged an artistic union in enameling, which would endure through three decades, marked by flawless technique, ever-increasing scale and the vibrant use of color.

After making his mark in the theater as a Shakespearean actor traveling with the Glove Theater Company during the 1930s, Jackson Woolley took a teaching position at the Frances Parker School in San Diego. Within two years, a new art teacher joined the faculty. Ellamarie Packard had trained at San Diego State College and Los Angeles Art Center. The actor from Pittsburgh and the artist from San Diego married in 1940. Then came World War II. Jackson served as a U.S. Army infantry lieutenant in Europe for four years. Although he was later reluctant to discuss his experience on the front, it would ultimately change both of their lives. After the war, driven by an intense need to immerse himself in something which would give him a measure of privacy as well as personal involvement, he decided not to return to the theater. He enrolled as an art student at Claremont Graduate School, and he and Ellamarie moved to the campus near Los Angeles.

One evening they joined a group of students at the home of Richard Petterson, an art professor, who demonstrated how to fuse enamel to metal, using a kiln which his father had made. It was the beginning of the Woolley's life-long fascination with an experimental medium. Tools and equipment were improvised or fabricated as they were needed. Enamel was purchased through the mail in bulk, then tediously ground by hand.

In 1948, the Woolleys moved back down the coast to San Diego, and soon bought their home in a secluded wooded area on San Diego's Point Loma, a peninsula which juts into the Pacific Ocean. The garage on an upper level of the property was converted into a studio and the rest of the house was expanded into a light-filled, redwood contemporary.

Self-taught and working on a trial-and-error basis, the Woolleys were full-time enameling pioneers, already beginning to receive the recognition of jurors of national exhibitions. They developed a sgraffito technique, incorporating a Cubist style, which would endure as their trademark design element. Opaque base coats of enamel were fired onto the pieces, then another color, usually dark brown, was sifted on. Various tools were used to draw through the unfired layer after it had dried. Dry opaque enamel in bright colors was then added in the outlined areas. "From the time a design is begun until it is fired it is in a precarious state and vulnerable to wind, dirt, jarring, coughing, sneezing, and insects," Jackson lamented. "A fly or spider can cause damage in an instant that will add hours of extra work."



Harlequin in the Sun
16 x 60", 1959

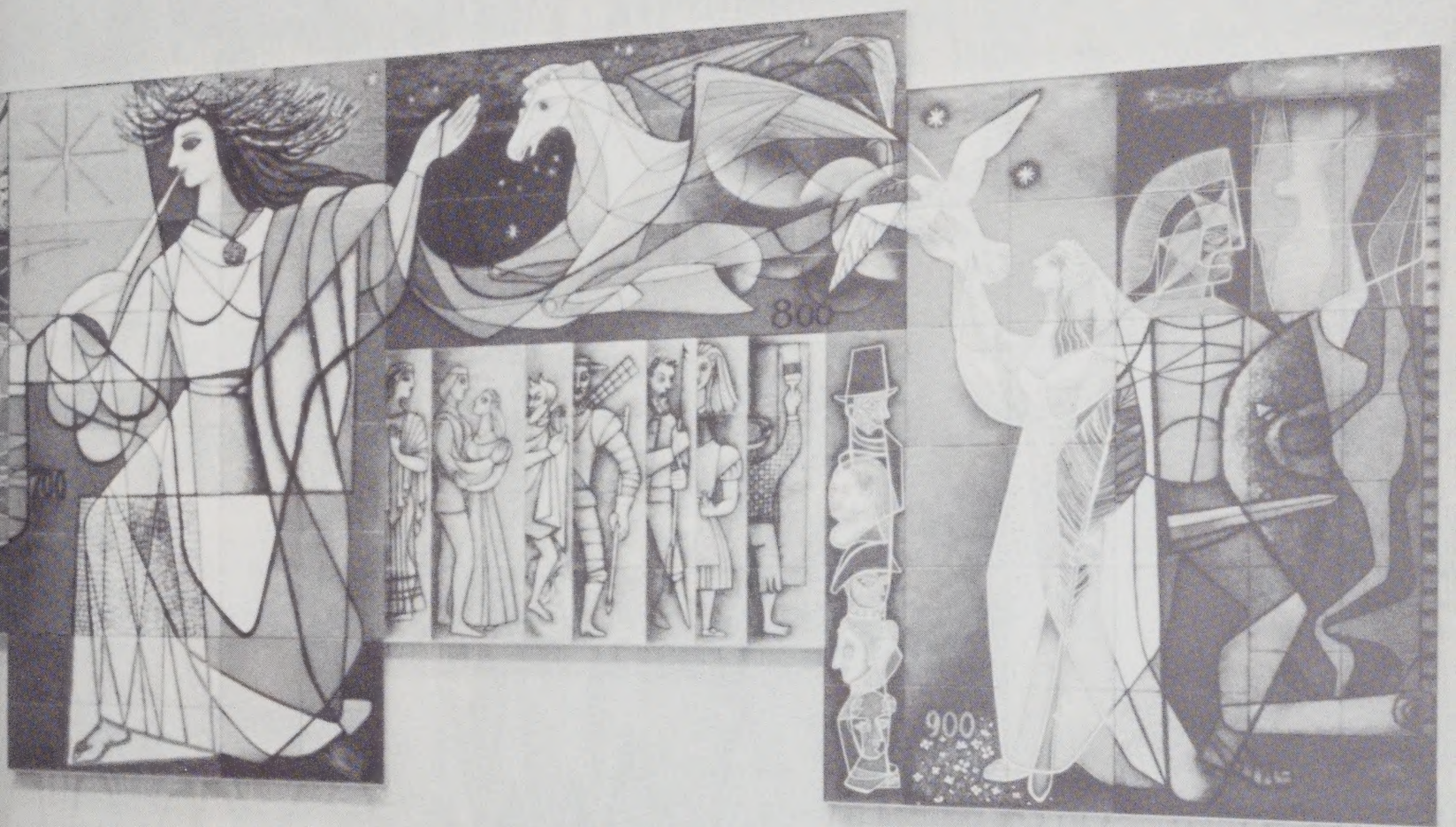
The Woolleys were concentrating on one-of-a-kind, individually designed, enameled bowls and plates, carefully numbering each one as a way of identifying them. Over the span of nearly 30 years, the number would exceed 5,000. The James Parker Collection, now housed at the Wichita Art Association in Wichita, Kansas, holds 125 of them, along with 33 wall panels.

In 1959, eager to move into new arenas, the Woolleys completed their first commission for an enamel mural at the Fresno (CA) County Library. *Bibliocosmos,* (the work of books), is composed of 416 separate rectangles of enameled 18 gauge copper, and measures 5½ feet x 32 feet. It was inspired by the Dewey decimal system of book classification, with symbolic forms arranged to suggest the logical structure and organization of knowledge. Design elements flow smoothly from panel to panel, overlapping and interweaving. In one section, *History,* War and Peace stand back-to-back. The male figure of War, represented in dark reds, clutches his sword and shield as the female figure of Peace, in luminous shades of white, releases a dove.

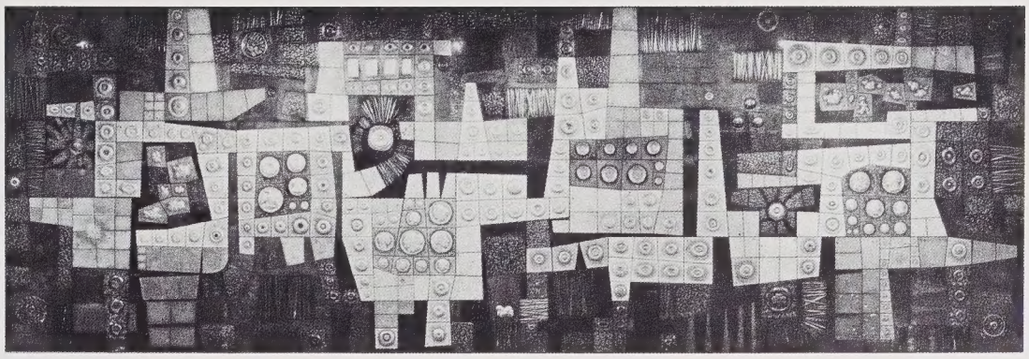
The Woolleys did the mural installation themselves, with the assistance of a Fresno college student. They padded and wrapped the sections at their home, and then took them to Fresno in a station wagon. "Fortunately, they just fit into the car," Ellamarie remarked at the time, "but it was a tricky job to fit them onto the wall. It took four days." The mural's design was a culmination of the varieties of sgraffito the Woolleys had done before. Although they continued to incorporate sgraffito in their work, they now pushed themselves to explore innovative designs and techniques, adding repoussé, patination and transparent enamels to the architectural scale commissions which followed. All of the murals were pieced together from sections, dictated by the size of the Woolley's small kiln. The hammered metal would become a significant part of each work, adding an organic, textural richness to the finished piece, but the enamel remained the heart of their work.

"It has been said," Ellamarie stated, "that enameling is character building: Will I be courageous and risk all to break through to something new? Will I carry on when everything goes wrong – as it frequently does? Will I exercise self-discipline and not follow every tempting path away from my main idea? Will I shake myself out of easy ruts? Will I take the risk of re-firing to correct a flaw? Or, conversely, will I be willing to overlook an imperfection in order to save an otherwise wonderful result?"

BOOKS
Bücher
500



***Bibliocosmos* mural**
Fresno County Free Library
enamel on copper
5½ x 32', 1959



Variations on a Gold Theme mural
12 x 36', 1965

Several critically acclaimed murals followed: *Wisdom* at Whittier Public Library, Whittier, CA; *Pacificana,* a 10 foot x 24 foot enameled copper repoussé wall at the Pacific Employers Group insurance companies building, Los Angeles; and four murals at the First Presbyterian Church, San Diego.

Pacificana mural (detail)
10 x 24', 1963

"We worked morning, afternoon, and sometimes into the evening," Jackson said. "It was always a struggle. As far as carrying out a design, each of us did our own. I did most of the repoussé, and Ellamarie did the flat pieces."

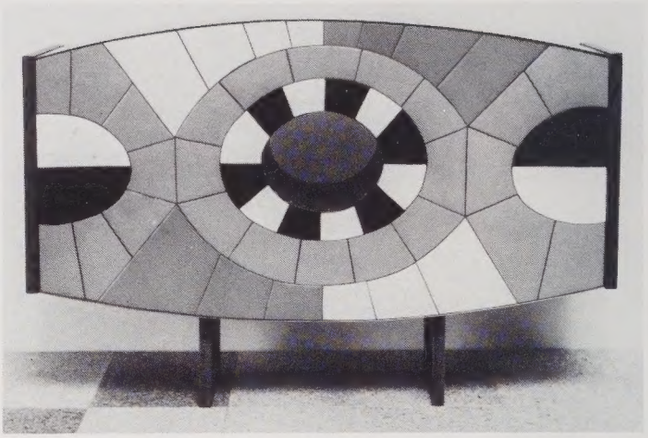
Work on a commission for the interior decoration of San Diego's new Civic Theater was begun in 1963 and proved to be another breakthrough in materials and technique. At the time, the Woolleys were experimenting with crinkling and crushing lightweight copper. For a year, they folded and pleated 850 copper shapes, which would be placed flowing up the walls of the main auditorium and also used as reflectors around the lights. The reflectors were created to project a moment of magic light, just as the house lights dimmed and the stage lights went on. The only enamel incorporated in the designs was in two 10 foot x 16 foot relief sculptures in the Grand Salon.

"The open, flowing, active forms of the design resulted from the natural characteristics of the copper when manipulated, so that the material was a full partner in every step of the creation," Jackson stated.

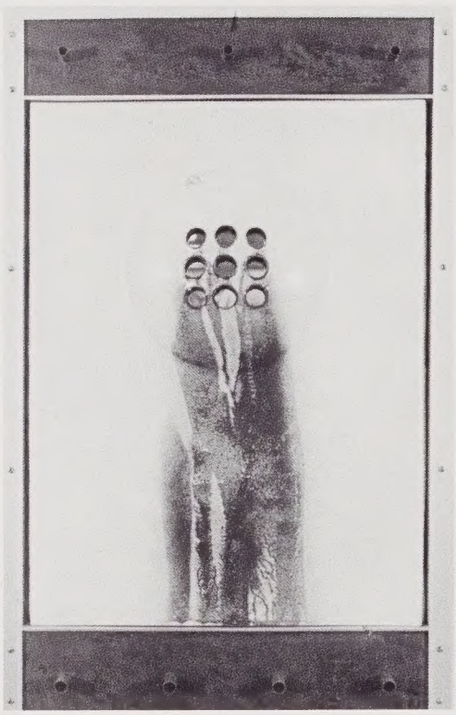
For the largest repoussé pieces, Jackson had a mattress on the floor to use as a hammering base. "I really should have heated the metal," he said, "but I found if I heated these bigger pieces, I would lose what I had done. So I worked with it when it was hard, and would just hammer away, wearing my little earplugs. We used the old copper/lead type from Ellamarie's father's print shop (Arts and Crafts Press), plus magazines and books to do the weighting for gluing. We had parts of it on the floor in the living room because we didn't have enough room downstairs for all the sections!"

When the Civic Theater opened in 1965, with the Woolley's copper forms in place, there was immediate controversy. Although there was some positive response, the most vocal critics, from theater patrons to local newspaper columnists, called the work "copper Reynolds Wrap" or "cookie cutters." Over time, sections were removed, and both the lights and copper elements arching over the proscenium were taken down. Neglect and a heavy layer of gray dust dulled what was left. In 1978, Jackson requested that the remaining work be removed from the theater. It has since been sold by the city, piece by piece, to avid collectors of the Woolley's art.

The couples last and largest mural was *Variations on a Gold Theme,* a 12 foot x 36 foot work over the main entrance to the First National Bank (now Union Bank), in downtown San Diego. The 375 pieces, which fit together to form the mural, incorporated both transparent and opaque enamels as well as patination over repoussé copper. The old alchemists' symbol of gold, a circle with a dot in the center, was used freely throughout the design in conjunction with motifs of ancient and modern coins.



Ellamarie Woolley
NOW Emblem
24½ x 37½ x 7½", 1966

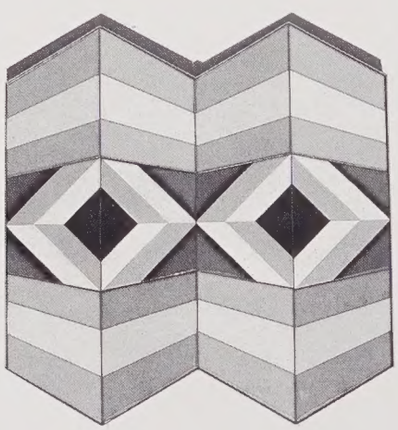


Jackson Woolley
Weepholes II
17¾ x 27⅜", 1974

The completion of their largest mural also served as an abrupt turning point in their careers. Although through the years each had continued to work on individual pieces, there was always a collaboration on large projects. Now they determined that they would find their separate artistic paths.

Ellamarie began to incorporate hard-edge geometric designs and photo silk-screen techniques in her enamels, using the shape as an integral part of the work. Many of the intense colors were used with a linear style to achieve the effects of optical illusions on flat plane surfaces. She also began to combine other materials – wood, fiber, wire – with the enamel. This new direction resulted in a grant from the NEA. "I realized that I had acquired some personal clichés of design and technique that I was using in a automatic way to do things I knew too well how to do," she explained in an artist's statement from that period. "An upheaval, a new start, a fresh eye were needed. While the enameling process used is really quite elemental, it has been the most demanding and difficult work I have yet done. There is no place to hide!"

Jackson turned his attention to wood, fiberglass and polyester resin constructions. Bicycling along the waterfront the "rivet patterns, rough over painted surfaces, black flanges and raw color juxtapositions" at the Tenth Avenue Terminal caught his eye. The result was perhaps the strongest work of his long career. Firm linear designs interplay with multiple circles, to anchor the pieces and create movement. Rows of studs introduce change in flat color areas. His few enamels done during that period reflect a similar geometry, with color-over-color abstractions. He also began experimenting with three-dimensional constructions of pierced and scored transparent, acrylic, plastic sheet – free standing small sculptures, hung in layered "window pieces."



Ellamarie Woolley
Double Squares, 16 x 17"

Ellamarie and Jackson Woolley
late 1940s

The Woolleys once again achieved acclaim. Their enamels had already been shown in numerous prestigious exhibitions, including five at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York. In 1972, they were given a two-artist show at the same Museum: *Ellamarie and Jackson Woolley / Enamel and Plastic.*

After Ellamarie's premature death from cancer in 1976, and an extensive six-week retrospective exhibition of her work at the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery, the next year, Jackson retreated from the larger arts community. Eventually, failing eyesight and a 40 percent hearing loss, which he attributed to hammering metal without the more sophisticated ear protection which is now available, sent him deeper into seclusion. He received few visitors without a carefully scheduled appointment.

Yet even in 1990, at the age of 79, he remained a charismatic and handsome man. His dignified, assured carriage, long white hair, and white beard were a reminder that he had been a Shakespearean actor in his pre-metals days. He talked of Ellamarie and their lives as artists. Although Ellamarie had been gone for 14 years, her presence was strong in the house, both in her works on the walls, and obviously in Jackson's thoughts. He mentioned her often.

Over four decades after that first experiment with putting some enamel on copper, Jackson mused, "It's almost like magic because you put this powder on and it melts and becomes something else. The colors are so good and so different from paint. You can be more rash about the kind of colors and the brightness you want, sometimes in ways that in paint will look cheap because it doesn't have the enamel feeling and depth and hardness, the permanence."

The house had a Zen-like sense of order and quiet, with sparse furniture – crafted wooden frames with bolsters – giving the vibrant artwork center stage. Enamels were everywhere, from the pulls on the dining room cupboards to the over 50 immediately recognizable "Woolley enamels" on the walls, to the repoussé pieces on the cantilevered fence outside. Their silk-screens waited in the studio, and in the "factory" room on the lower level, works in progress lined tables and walls.

Jackson Woolley was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor in September, 1991. He spent the next few months organizing his files and slides, and making personal arrangements. He was in bed only one week before he died in his sleep, without pain, last January. Per his wishes, he was cremated and the ashes were scattered in the Pacific Ocean that glimmered as far as the eye could see from his living room window.

The lives of Ellamarie and Jackson Woolley have ended, but their legacy remains in public spaces, and private and museum collections throughout the country. Their spirits live on, captured in glass on metal.

Janice Keaffaber is a writer living in San Diego.

One-Piece Cutting Dies

BY DAVID SHELTON

The idea of using a die to cut out multiple pieces of a single shape is at least as old as Christmas cookies. Dies are used industrially to make millions of parts each day, from computer parts to soda cans. Because the tools used in industrial settings are both complicated and expensive, few metalsmiths have taken advantage of the possibilities that dies offer. Recent experiments in the use of a one piece cutting die, however, have resulted in a low cost studio-based alternative to commercial options.

Simply put, a cutting die works by sliding one hardened edge against another, as in a pair of scissors. The material to be cut, trapped between a stabile edge and a downward moving edge is sheared when it can no longer resist the strain. In the case of a traditional cutting die, one piece of the die (the negative) has a cut out silhouette of the desired shape and the other half (the positive) has a similar shape that is slightly smaller. The trick was never so much the making of these pieces as it was guaranteeing their precise alignment. The one piece die solves this problem by creating both the positive and negative pieces from a single sheet allowing the positive to remain attached or hinged as shown. The material to be cut is slid into position (the shaded area) and it will be sheared when the unit is pressed closed.

Though the concept is simple, the topic is large enough to warrant much more description than can be included here. Rather than furnishing a complete step-by-step guide, I will address some of the problems I have encountered and offer the solutions that have worked for me.

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Designing the Die

Successful one-piece cutting dies require the correct combination of three elements: the proper thickness of the tool steel, the sawblade size, and the angle of the cut. As Figure 1 illustrates, it is the angle of the cut that simultaneously creates a cutting edge on both die halves. The width of the sawblade must be carefully matched to the angle so that the two parts will have zero tolerance (no gap) when they pass by each other. The technique can accomodate most sawn shapes of thicknesses up to 12 gauge B&S. Some intricate patterns may require experimentation in order to develop a die that is tight enough to cut while remaining sufficiently loose to insert the work material. One drawback of this process is that it is limited to cutting only silhouettes and outline forms. "Donut holes" are not possible. Because the tolerances are so fine, things can get a little complicated in the practical application of the principle.

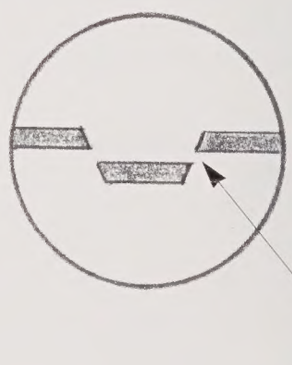
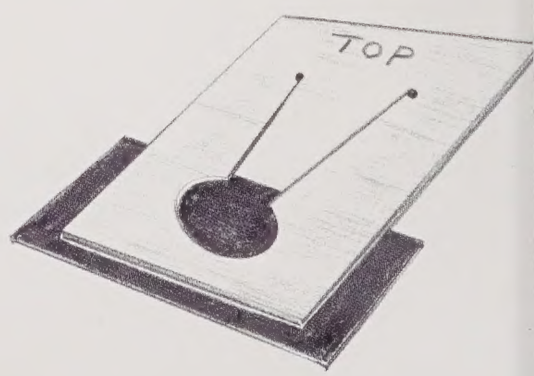


FIGURE 1

For very thin gauge material (28 or thinner) I suggest that you make the die even tighter by increasing the angle by ½ degree. This however will make the die difficult to open, especially if the design is intricate. Complicated designs must be cut a little "loose" to allow them to open for insertion of the stock. Unfortunately this also increases the possibility of poor cutting, especially on thin material. Because of this and the fact that blade size differs slightly between manufacturers, experimentation will be necessary to find the precise sizes that work best for you.

Intricate dies, especially those that have small projections, are best made of steel that is at least 1/16" thick. For these dies I use a smaller sawblade (such as 2/0) which allows for delicate cutting and tight turns. As a rule of thumb, thick steel and fine blade size give the best results, but this combination is the slowest and most tiring when it comes to cutting. Most of my dies are made from 3/64" or 1/16" tool steel. I usually use a #0 blade, which results in a die that is relatively easy to saw and with proper heat treatment, such a die will survive a couple of thousand punches on jewelry metals.



This chart shows the recommended angle of the sawblade for a moderately tight die.

Sawblade size

Steel thickness (inches)

	5/0	4/0	3/0	2/0	1/0	1	2	3	4
1/32	17.5	19	21	23					
3/64	12	14	15	17	18	19.5			
1/16	9.5	10.5	11.5	12	13.5	14.5	18.5		
5/64			10	10.5	11	11.5	13		
3/32							11		12

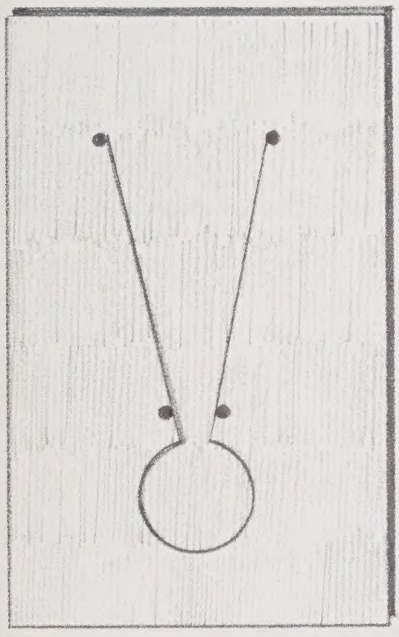


FIGURE 2

When laying out a die it is important to make the hinge long enough to provide spring for the positive element. Generally this length should be between 1½ to 3", depending on the scale of the design. Hinges that are too short make the die difficult to load, but a hinge that is too long allows the die to bend, shifting the parts of the die out of alignment. For an earring of typical size, I make the hinge about 2" long and allow at least a ⅜" border around the die. I drill a pair of holes at the top of the hinge and near the perimeter of the design (Figure 2) then carefully cut the design with the proper angle and blade. When this is done I connect the holes with two freehand lines, cut with a larger blade and a conventional sawing technique. No angle is necessary for this edge because it is not a cutting surface.

Making the Die

Several sawing options are available for the die maker. Industrial, machine-powered scroll saws represent one end of the spectrum, bringing both high tech and high cost. At the other end is the conventional jeweler's sawframe used with a tilting bench pin, (see endnotes.) Without some sort of guide to keep the blades vertical, the cutting angle will vary by enough to affect the function of the die. In my opinion the Bonny Doon precision saw guide offers an ideal and affordable solution to this problem. Consisting of a tilting bench pin with an apparatus which a jewelers saw clips into, this device assures that the saw is made to ride exactly vertical on a guide rail.

There is little to say about the sawing process except for the fact that it is physically taxing when done by hand. Obviously, powered saws make it less physically demanding, but in my opinion they are harder to control. Both methods of sawing require considerable practice to develop proficiency. After sawing, the die should be ground or sanded to soften the edges, so they will not scar the workpiece.

Heat treatment has caused me many headaches – there are many ways to make mistakes here and I have tried them all! If done correctly, however, this step can increase the life of a die by 10 or 20 times. On the other hand, if heat treatment is done incorrectly it will ruin the die. Precise temperatures are required and remember that consistent execution yields consistent results.

I use oil hardening steel because it is the most forgiving and readily available stock, but air or water hardening steels will also work, and case hardening is a possibility for larger dies. A small kiln with a pyrometer is necessary to achieve the exact temperatures needed for heat treating. A kiln with an internal size of 9" x 9" x 9" works well for me. Overheating or irregular heating will probably cause parts of the die to shift, ruining the alignment that is vital to a precise die.

In the hardening phase, the steel is brought to a red-orange color and quenched in oil. This is probably in the range of 1450 – 1500°F: follow the steel manufacture's directions. The die can be sealed in stainless steel "tool wrap" foil to reduce oxidation and subsequent cleanup. To minimize distortion, bring the whole die to a uniform color. This can take anywhere from a few minutes to about an hour, depending on the size of the kiln and the size and number of dies being heated at one time.

Grasp the die firmly in the center at the bottom and plunge it immediately into a bucket of slightly warm (125 – 150°F) lightweight oil. The die must be held vertically, or it will almost certainly warp. Swirl the die slowly in the oil to even the cooling process and allow it to remain there until it is cool enough to be held in the fingers. Remove the die from the bath and wipe off the oil coating.

At this point the die is very hard and also extremely brittle. For this reason, resist the temptation to correct it at this time, even if it is bent. The brittleness is relieved (and some of the hardness given up) in the process called *tempering,* in which the steel is brought up to a uniform temperature and soaked for about an hour.

There is no "correct" temperature for tempering but the range is between 450 – 600°F (230 – 320°C). I temper in the 500 – 575° (260 – 300°C) range, as I consider this range offers the best tradeoff between hardness and flexibility. As an example, a die tempered to only 450°F will be hard enough to cut tough metal like nickel silver or 14K gold without undue wear, but such a die risks breaking, especially if the design is delicate or requires a great deal of force to punch out. Conversely a die tempered to 600°F is probably not subject to breaking but it is soft enough to wear out prematurely, especially at sharp corners. The exact temperature should be determined for each die, considering factors such as its size, detail, and intended use. Experimentation is necessary.

After heat treatment and cleaning, the die must be prepared before being used. The hinge area functions as a spring and must undergo its own heat treatment, which brings it to a slightly higher temper than the rest of the die. Use a torch with a relatively small flame to heat the hinge and the area adjacent to its base to a bright blue color. It is only after this step that the die can be realigned. With the die on an anvil, strike it with a slightly rounded steel hammer to stretch the steel and move the positive element, (Figure 3). It will be forced away from the location of the blows, as shown. Check the alignment by examining the gap very closely. The time you spend in perfecting this fit will result in efficient cutting and a smooth edge.

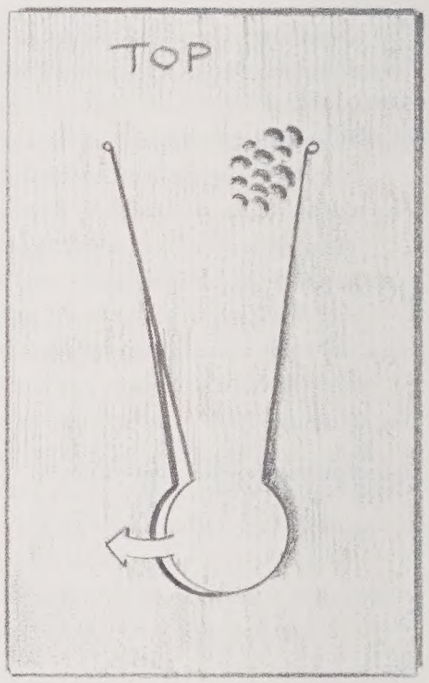


FIGURE 3

The die should then be opened and cleaned with a steel wire brush. To "pre-spring" the die, leaving it in an opened position, slide a piece of brass shim into the die and anneal the section at the very base of the hinge in a line at connects the two holes there.

Dies sometime require realignment during use, so it is important to inspect them periodically. Misalignment can cause metal to jam in the die, throwing it even further out of alignment and causing the opposite area to overlap, driving the cutting edges into each other, which can damage or ruin the die.

Using the Die

The die cuts by pressing the positive element through the negative one. For consistently clean results, the action should be smooth, forceful and controlled. To achieve this, set the die between two pieces of ½" steel plate large enough to completely enclose the die. Hammers cannot be used to punch dies because the depth of the blow cannot be controlled. Pushing too far *(bottoming out)* presses the die into the opposite plate and will damage it. In addition, even a strong die may break under the shock of an impact blow.

For small dies a simple bench vise can be used to press the plates together. This method lacks sufficient power to tackle large jobs or thick stock, however. A screw-down arbor press offers an affordable alternative with increased power (in the 3 – 8 ton range), but even this may still lack the force needed for some dies and materials. Hand operated hydraulic jacks provide increased power (up to 20 tons) and are available at a reasonably low cost. The most expensive units are motorized hydraulic punch presses, but these are usually beyond the finances and usual needs of most metalsmiths. If larger jobs are undertaken I recommend consulting with commercial toolmakers.

Obviously, the push of the jack won't do any good unless it has something to press against. Commercial frames are available, or one can be welded together from 2" angle iron. The force being used here is considerable, so avoid thin steel and timid welds. The size of the frame will depend on your needs. When making your own I recommend that you purchase the jack first then make a frame about 6" taller in its inside dimension. I suggest lining the plates with ⅛" to ½" Plexiglass to prevent excessive marring of the work material. These sheets can be attached with double-sided tape and replaced when they start scarring the work material.

To operate the die, slide the material into position and set the prepared die into the press. Pump the jack and listen for the clear "snap" as the die punches out the shape. The press is then backed off, the cutout piece is retrieved, and the die is set up to cut out another piece.

Efficiency Techniques

Once you discover a rhythm, simple die cutting can go relatively quickly (at least compared to sawing out each piece!) but when large numbers of pieces are needed you will want to increase efficiency even more. One method is to create a die that has several identical forms, as in Figure 4. This obviously takes longer in the sawing stage, but it will make each die plate that much more productive.

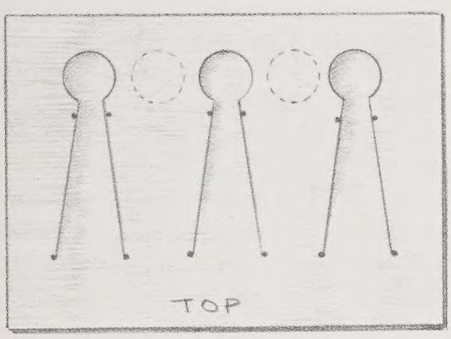


FIGURE 4

I use a homemade *loading block* (Figure 5) to lift the positive element of the die so a sheet of stock can be slid into position. These simple devices are made with a couple of screws at one end to hold the bottom edge of the die, and another to lift the center of the die. Be sure to locate the lifting screw away from the area of the pattern being cut. Blocks aren't needed for most single dies, but they are an immense help with multiple dies.

When using dies, be careful not to leave scraps of metal in the press, where they could overlap the next piece being cut. Because the die is made for a specific thickness of stock, such an overload can ruin the die in a single punch. Also because these dies cut in only one direction, the top should be clearly marked. If you insert the material to be cut from the back, the die will not be damaged, but the metal is likely to be difficult to remove. The result, by the way, is an interesting embossed effect that may have some use for the enterprising designer.

Allow 1/32 to 1/16 of an inch all the way around, though a tight die will cut right up to the edge of the sheet, leaving less scrap. Designs with a straight side should be loaded carefully to minimize cleanup of the cut piece.

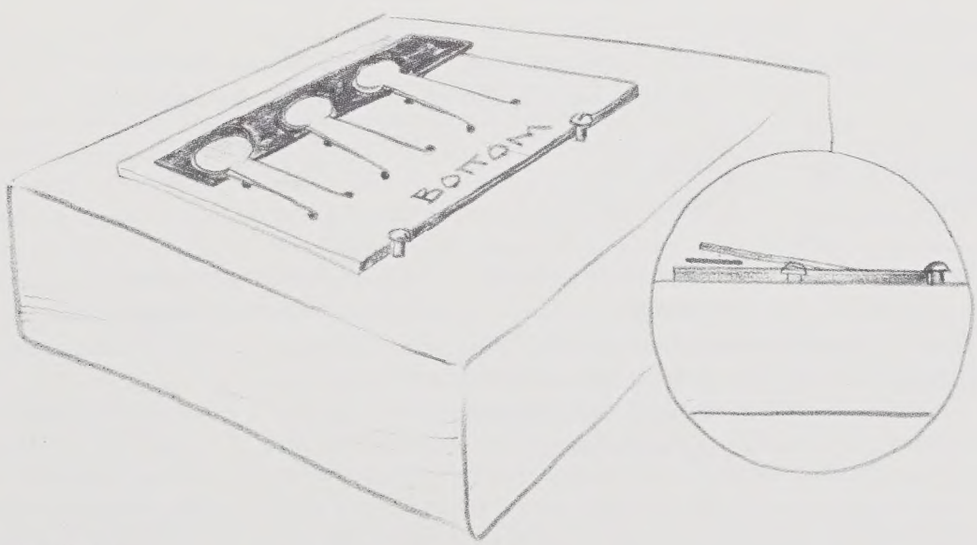


FIGURE 5

Endnotes

This process has been most recently published by Roger Taylor of England, though there is evidence of experiments with similar techniques being done in ancient times and again in the early days of automobile manufacture.

Saws and presses are available from:

Rio Grande Albuquerque
6901 Washington Ave. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109
(800) 545-6566

Bonny Doon Engineering
250 Tasset Court
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
(408) 423-1023.

Precision Ground Flat Stock can also be bought from Grainger's (check local phonebook) and Manhattan Supply Company (800-645-7270) or Rutland Tool & Supply (800-289-4787). Call for a local dealer.

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	REASON	SOLUTION
Metal sticks in die	Die loose, worn out or misaligned	Realign. Make over, tighter
Parts have burr	Die loose, worn out or misaligned	Realign. Make over, tighter
Even shifting	This is normal	Hammer to realign
Uneven shifting	Too hot, uneven heating or cooling	
Warping	Not immersed vertically when quenched, or die too large and thin	Use thicker steel; quench vertically
Breaking during use	Too low a heat or too short a time in tempering. Scraps in press	Temper at higher temperature
Wearing out; die too soft	Too hot when tempering not hot enough in quenching	Reharden, then temper to a higher temperature
Cracking during heat treatment	Oil too cold, water in the oil	Warm oil
Scarring of strips or parts	Sharp corners on edges of the die	Sand or grind round before heat treating
Dies breaking	Dies not fully covered by the press. Press imparting too much impact	

David Shelton manufactures dies for metalsmiths through his company: Sheltech.

Letters

Dear Editor:

On what other occasion has the metal community been the beneficiary of a commercial sponsor who offers artistic freedom, funding and prize money to all participants in a competition devoted to new forms and expressions in vessel and flatware design? I ask this question in response to "Point of View: Silver New Forms and Expressions III" by Mary Douglas. According to Ms. Douglas, only the sponsor may have benefited from this exhibition while her colleagues in SNAG encountered "retail hell."

In 1988, Fortunoff sponsored the first of three annual competitions. Each collection was juried by a museum curator and two members of the metalsmith community. A catalogue designed by David Tisdale and his associate Judy Smilow accompanied the exhibit for two of the three years. Each collection opened in New York at Fortunoff, with a preview party and press coverage by writers from *Metalsmith, American Craft, Metropolis,* and *Southern Accents,* among others. Every year, the collection traveled to university galleries and museums.

In 1991-1992, the collection encountered space and catalogue restrictions. In spite of these cut-backs, the collection has been seen by more than 20,000 viewers on its tour to the National Ornamental Metal Museum, Louisiana State University, Brown University and The Walter Anderson Museum of Art.

Richard Mawdsley, liaison for SNAG, reviewed the many aspects of this project when I approached him in 1987. We anticipated the possible pitfalls but concluded that the potential rewards would far outweigh the negative factors. Nowhere was it stated that this competition would be focused on product design as assumed by Ms. Douglas. Its purpose was to challenge the imagination and skill of the metalsmith. That industry has not responded may speak of economic factors in the market place. SNAG should not be faulted for factors out of its control.

– Rosanne Raab
Coordinator/Fortunoff Silver Competition

Dear Editor:

As the SNAG liaison to the Fortunoff sponsored "Silver: New Forms and Expression" exhibition series, I would like to respond to recent criticism that appeared in *Metalsmith* by Mary Douglas of one of these exhibitions. My involvement included working with Rosanne Raab, the consultant who administered this project, developing the basic concept, working out details, helping select jurors, etc. I also sold this project to the SNAG board knowing that it was not ideal in absolute terms, but acceptable in professional terms. An important ingredient in personal expression is taking risks; retreating into the traditional prestige institution, while desirable, is not a risk. The results of an alternative site can be unique, and I felt this was well worth pursuing.

One unfortunate oversight of Ms. Douglas's criticism is that the Fortunoff site was only one part of a much larger project. There were three "New Forms and Expression" exhibitions. Each traveled to several recognized regional and national museums, and two were shown at SNAG conferences. The three exhibitions were shown at a total of nine different locations, and only one of these has created controversy.

Before this project was approved, I visited the Fortunoff exhibition area. While the merchandise displayed in back was disturbing, it was shielded enough not to be overly intrusive. The large windows allowed a lot of natural light, enlarged the area, and isolated it enough to make an acceptable space. One goes to an exhibition to see good work, not to judge marquees, pedestals, decor, or to see who is exhibited next to whom. Whatever distractions were present could not compete with the quality of the work in these exhibitions.

What was persuasive about the Fortunoff location was the next floor down which is largely devoted to antique silver. One contributing factor to the dramatic growth in popularity of glass a decade ago was that a number of antique glass collectors were exposed to and began collecting, modern glass. Expanding a serious collecting audience is important for any media, and this was an opportunity to bring the vitality of the modern vessel to the attention of potential collectors.

Fortunoff used their publicity expertise to bring the print media's attention to these exhibitions, and always illustrated the work as the centerpiece of purchased publicity. In most cases, this was the same kind of publicity that museums seek to generate, but Fortunoff's expertise produced amounts of coverage that would have made any museum envious. The first "New Forms and Expression" exhibition was the subject of a feature article in *American Craft Magazine.* In looking over this material it appears to me that the artist was the beneficiary more than Fortunoff.

The dialogue as to how the contemporary crafts can improve its societal and artistic standing, and the need to secure support from business and industry is often mentioned. The primary reason for this is economic. As the SNAG exhibition committee chairperson, I had been trying to organize a vessel exhibition for four years prior to this project. I wrote proposals to several museums including the ones mentioned in the *Metalsmith* criticism. The Renwick Gallery is not allowed to display competitive exhibits. Some museums showed considerable interest, but declined for various reasons, mainly financial. Several did not believe my proposal had much value, but many were willing if SNAG would finance the entire exhibition. Fortunoff wanted SNAG's expertise and was willing to invest a substantial sum of money. I felt "New Forms and Expression" was an excellent opportunity to develop such a partnership with business.

Talking about money may not be appropriate in art discussions, but I believe it noteworthy that all invited artists received an honorarium and, to encourage new talent, all juried artists were reimbursed for the cost of silver used. In twenty five years of exhibition involvement, I have never seen an exhibition acknowledge the artist with an honorarium. This in my opinion, was a positive, professional thing to have occur.

Another important factor to consider was the opportunity to expose museum curators, through jury membership, to the creative energy being displayed by vessel makers. Both the Brooklyn and the Cooper-Hewitt Museums made purchases for their collections from the competitive component of these exhibitions.

The three exhibitions produced three catalogs. The first two had individual photos of all the work shot on site. These catalogs had critical essays by Vanessa Lynne and Jack Lenor Larson respectively. David Tisdale's design firm did the layouts. The third catalog was disappointing compared to the first two. Fortunoff was severely affected by the recession and had to cut back. Having been through lean times as a member of SNAG's board, I know making cuts is not pleasant. The essentials of the third exhibition were untouched so I never considered recommending SNAG withdraw.

In the positive column are: respected traveling schedules, two beautiful catalogs, silver reimbursements and honorariums, two major museum purchases, extensive print coverage, an article in *American Craft,* $600,00 in prize money, badly needed exposure of the metal vessel, and a business partnership. In the negative column are: one catalog and one apparently controversial exhibition site. Based on the all positive aspects, I would pursue this or a similar project again and recommend that SNAG become involved. I accept responsibility for any imperfections and take pride in many of the results, as I hope SNAG does.

– Richard Mawdsley

Reviews

Introducing New Gallery Artists

The Sybaris Gallery
Royal Oak, Michigan
July 25 – August 29, 1992

by Jo Ellen Stevens

Works by
Daniel Waverly Eaves

FAR LEFT
Last Drop
tin cans, tinplate
pot: 8 x 11 x 5″
cups: 4¼ x 4¾ x 3″, 1992

LEFT
Corn Harvest
galvanized sheet metal,
screen, brass, corn cobs,
corn plaster, silver,
7½ x 5½ x 5½″, 1992

RIGHT, TOP
Jucier
orange juicer parts,
tin cans, plastic orange
refridgerator magnets,
11 x 4 x 5″, 1991

RIGHT, BOTTOM
Contempotin
tinplate, auto-drip coffee
maker parts,
13 x 5½ x 10″, 1991

The Sybaris Gallery presented works by its newest young artists in a summer show of metalwork by Daniel Eaves and ceramics by Taylor Bradley and Karen Sullivan.

Summer gallery fare is frequently easy to digest. This season's offering celebrated life and granted a reprieve from taking ourselves too seriously. Consequently, the eight works by Daniel Eaves used familiar objects and themes with humor and a touch of romance to invite viewers to honor the common heroics of ordinary life. Eaves, a native of the rural South, lauded his cultural and historical roots via his choice of ordinary objects, fitting materials, and relevant techniques; yet there was neither the maudlin nostalgia nor the selective fundamentalist prescription that regularly pervades this type of folksy art. Any values proffered were simply portrayed as a tribute to the people of this unique area; they were not served up on the altar of correctness.

Eaves use of the domestic object (i.e. kitchen appliances or utensils) shifted from the usual contemporary feminist strategies to a perhaps radically "new" nonsexist position: the common ground of equal gender usage. In the two coffee sets entitled *Last Drop* and *From The Mountains,* the functional object percolates in its "self-ness" and a phenomenological exploration of coffee, pot, and cup. Maxwell House and Folgers brand cans supplied the artist with contemporary materials, a visual bite familiar to every grocery's customers. These printed labels, transformed to appropriate decoration, brewed poetic justice to the art of advertising. The playful use of hole-punched cans for the basket and colorful jam jar tops for the stem's base, produced an uncanny effect upon lifting the lid of the coffee pot. The artist's research on and use of traditional tinware forms and techniques, such as turned edges and lapped and tin soldered seams, imbued the artwork with historical presence and authenticity.

The daily ceremony of breakfast was awakened in *Contempotin* by the provocation of a tin plate auto-drip coffee-maker. The coffee-maker wore the serious architecture of industry: shiny tinplate, sleek form dotted with pan head screws, a heavy utility cord with a three-pronged plug, and a perforated aluminum sheet used for the water pour and basket areas. The integration of industrial material and methods stressed the work aspect of the auto-drip. The beverage labored from this appliance is a strong cup; no demitasse dessert brews allowed!

Also keeping with the kitchen theme was *Juicer.* This appliance comported a monumental stance as it tiptoed on little plastic orange refrigerator magnet feet, wearing "TreeSweet 100% Orange Juice" labels around its midsection and a shiny white ceramic squeezer hat. Eaves replaced the original electric cord with one fittingly colored black, yellow, and orange. The pop rivet and tab construction added to this operable *Sunkist Juicit* contributed a frivolous humor.

Departing from the playful arena, the final works in the show reaped a respectful tribute to the Southern farmer. Three jewelry boxes miniaturized the structure of the rural landscape. In *Corn Cobs* and *Corn Harvest,* small scale versions of two styles of corn cribs fulfilled their function as storage containers. The jewels they contained were not only precious corn seed and dried cobs but equally valuable tools of the harvest: a tiny tractor pulling a four row corn planter and a combine with a harvesting head. Both implements were intricate sterling brooches. In these pieces, Eaves effectively cultivated a reverence for the work and tools of agriculture and their products. Another jewelry box was the charming *How Sweet the Sound.* A replica of a Southern Baptist church, this musical piece played the hymn "Amazing Grace" when the roof / lid was lifted. The empty interior reflected the individual quest to satisfy one's inner spiritualism.

Jo Ellen Stevens is a metalsmith and writer who resides in Ohio.

Jenny Chun
Fabricated Rings, 1992
LEFT: copper, 24K gold foil
CENTER: nickel, sterling silver
RIGHT: sterling silver

Cynthia Schlemlein
Raised Coffee Pot, sterling silver, mastadon tusk, 15 x 7", 1992

The Integrity of Metal, I, II, III

Ag47 Studio Gallery
Seattle, Washington
July – September 1992

by Ron Glowen

A major purpose of the three-part group exhibition *The Integrity of Metal,* at the Ag47 Studio Gallery in Seattle, was to raise awareness of the metal arts in a community already highly regarded for its active and diverse visual arts scene. Despite the presence of noted metalworkers in Seattle – John Marshall, Mary Lee Hu, Candace Beardsley and Kiff Slemmons to name a few – public interest in the medium seems to take a back seat to other "hot" crafts such as glass or ceramics.

In addition, *The Integrity of Metal* was promoted as a showcase for emerging talents. Assistant gallery director Gina Pankowski, with colleagues Cynthia Schlemlein and Virginia Causey (all metal artists), assembled the work of about 35 metal artists recently graduated from the University of Washington or the Pratt Fine Arts Center workshops.

Aside from the usual categorical arguments (is it jewelry or small sculpture?; metal artist or artist working in metal?; precious object or product of esthetic investigation?), it is safe to say much of the work was made to be worn as the condition of its public display. Nevertheless, it looked good, of course, in display cases or on the shelves. Wearable art is greatly affected by the personality of the wearer, which sometimes overpowers the creative statement of the object's maker. To counter this, *The Integrity of Metal* suggested that viewers look at formal and process-oriented factors rather than function. Thus, the guiding sensibility of the exhibitions was to encourage the examination of works as "small sculptures" and pure design.

Yet, the idea of function still lurked as the context for much of the work. Approximately half of the work featured was wearable ornament. Architectural and domestic objects which included grilles, lamps, tables, and vessels, etc., made up another sizable portion of the three exhibitions. The remainder of the three shows was comprised of a few pictorial or image-bearing wall pieces and small objects with a more sculptural intent, though, even these works, often included some consideration of function and/or wearability.

I'm willing to tip my hand, and declare that I look for meaning over issues of making in art. And while I'm not unsympathetic to the challenges of technique and material manipulation, I'm not well-versed in it. Mastering a high degree of technical difficulty is worthy of congratulation, but it does not strike me as the "raison d'etre" of art. On the other hand, it must be noted that Seattle is fortunate to have such metal art experts as Marshall and Hu, and their influence (in terms of technique and design) on students is evident in this show.

Large group shows also tip the hand of the reviewer. The works one selects to discuss or mention may be exceptions to the general tenor of the show, or they may only reflect personal taste and judgment. With the wide artistic and technical range presented by 35 artists, I feel inclined to simply point out the works that attracted or intrigued me the most.

Marilyn Smith's brooches, shaped like boats seen in rushing perspective, often illustrate themes from the history of art. Horace Luke's pins depict whimsical little vignettes from everyday life. Jenny Chun's fabricated sheet silver "containers" feature ingenious clasps and moving parts and the works are either simple blocky forms or miniature objects, i.e. *Dirigible.*

Gina Pankowski makes jewelry with movable elements – tubed, sliding channels for gemstone settings or metal shapes that are in continual, asymmetrical movement. Judith Laub's more abstract and somewhat fetishistic works incorporate tubular and semi-cylindrical elements of silver and copper with bright and matte patinas.

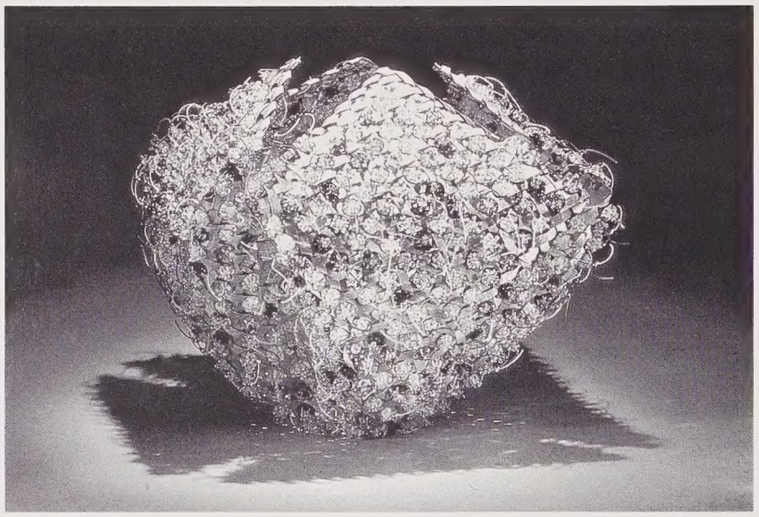
On a larger scale, the work of Erik Bilello and Steve Northey reveal architectural or industrial metaphors. Bilello's gate of hand-forged iron in a woven pattern of pointed arches and spike blossoms, which includes a tympanum rendered in a design of receding, ascendant perspective, could easily be integrated into a private villa or church. Northey's torched steel-plate table, with an etched glass top, is painted with oil pigments to mimic weathering or patina. It is an elegant "work-shop" piece.

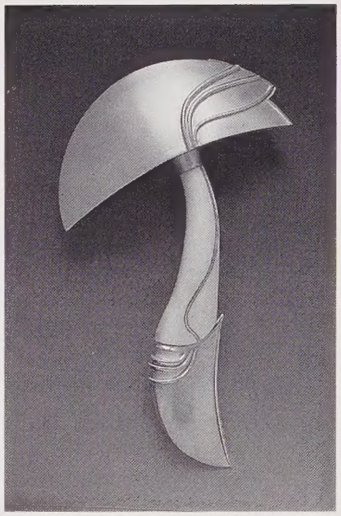
Functional furnishings or vessels by Lynne Hull, Cynthia Schlemlein and Pamela Harlow unite metalsmithing's ancient origins as the material for useful implements with a contemporary designer's sensibility to form and tactility. Hull's "uncoiling", stemmed drinking cups and elegant, slender torchère lamp of patinaed copper are succinct contemporary design statements. Schlemlein's chased silver, holloware pitcher melds a biomorphic look with a machine esthetic, lending an intimate sense of feel to the "anonymous" modern object. Harlow's lantern forms for the garden, modest and simple, seem intended for a tailored Japanese landscape.

Some works suffer from the syndrome of too much experimentation, not enough restraint. Given that this exhibition is mainly comprised of work by emerging and young artists, this probably reflects a case of artists not yet having found their sensibility or direction. I hope. Fetishistic agglomerations and multi-stepped techniques may be rewarding to artists, in terms of process, the intimacy of making, or perhaps these things even have therapeutic value; but it's usually a mess to look at and to figure out.

Whether *The Integrity of Metal* will elevate awareness of the metal arts in Seattle cannot yet be measured, but it is certainly a step in the right direction. Perhaps it will take continuing efforts, such as yearly surveys or exhibitions curated with an eye toward selected themes, content or context, to bring metal art into the orbits currently enjoyed by other craft-oriented, media-based arts in this town.

Ron Glowen is an art critic based in Seattle, and teaches art history at the Cornish College of the Arts. He is currently editor of the Glass Art Society Journal.





FAR LEFT
John Garrett
Jubilee Pod
aluminum, hardware, cloth, beads, sequins, wire, plastic covered

LEFT
Vickie Lee Sedman
Double Blade Brooch
sterling silver, antler, fabricated

Silver Jubilee

Artspace: A Gallery of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
August 7 – October 4, 1992

by Michal Ann Carley

Silver Jubilee is a salute in honor of the 25th anniversary of the John Michael Kohler Art Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

The artists featured in *Silver Jubilee* all have the earmarks of sophisticated technical proficiency and many display their ability to design elegantly and/or sensitively. The strongest works, however, use their formal language to connote or evoke something more personal or pertinent than simple formal investigation. The works by Robert Joseph Farrell are some of the more outstanding examples of wizardry with materials that do not simply dazzle the viewer with technical virtuosity and display. *Toss V Salad Set's* evocative surfaces (sterling silver, hollow construction and die forming, copper, brass, 18K gold, hammered inlay) confounds the utilitarian mandate of its title and form. The hammered inlay of the handles suggests both a process of accretion and disturbance that has evolved temporally while the swirling patterns and coloration of the multiple metals reference the decorative mottling of Gustav Klimt's painted surfaces. This fascination with layering and the backwards and forwards of process is conveyed with wit and beauty as one uses the implements to "toss the salad."

Paulette J. Werger also draws from an evocative relationship with the earth's history. In *Charm Bracelet and Fish* a polished circular cuff of silver doesn't complete itself but is closed by an angular zigzag of gold. Lathed onto the circle with delicate bands is a cast pewter form. Its surface is irregular and densely grey and its abstract shape conjures a mystical fish, canoe or similar talisman. The juxtaposition of the precious with the mundane, and the rigidity of contrived geometric lines connecting to natural biomorphic shapes convey an interdependence of humanity and nature.

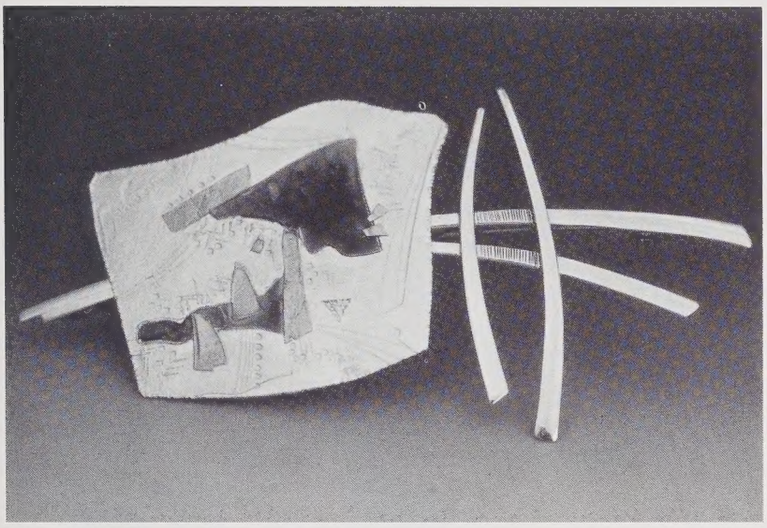
Phone Fear (sterling silver, copper, stainless steel, drawing on Mylar, Plexiglas) by Bruce Metcalf is an acerbic lampoon of our tendency to signify inconsequential aspects of daily existence. Just as commercial television ads which display our fears of possessing dirty collars, halitosis and tacky clothes persuade us that we are inadequate, Metcalf pictorially exaggerates our social anxieties and illustrates just how wretched our everyday life may really be. The brooch shows a metallic, histrionic woman, articulated in jutting, running triangular shapes as she is overcome by the act of talking on her telephone. This vignette takes place on an "artfully" colored backdrop of an interior in isometric perspective, adding to the claustrophobic disproportion of the banal act.

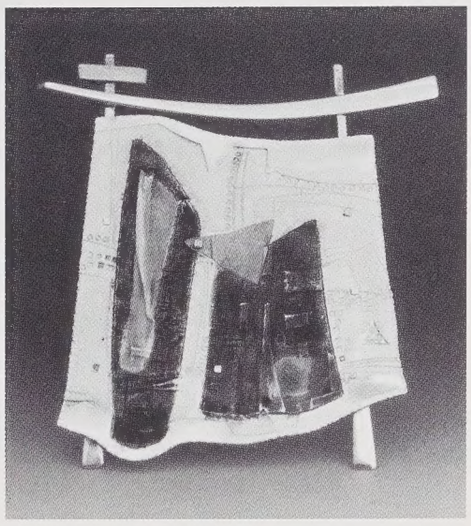
The fabricated silver and animal antler that comprise the *Double Blade Brooch* by Vickie Lee Sedman is a merger of the inherent beauty of materials and the provocative power of the force from which both humans and animals have evolved. *Double Blade Brooch* has two expanded blades advancing in divergent directions but held in common purpose by the curvilinear elements of silver wrapping around and caressing the antler handle/shaft. The male deer's antler, used to attack, defend and attract other deer is both a symbol and an instrument of power. So too has the design and use of the curved blade functioned for humankind. The size of the brooch is large and its symbolism is overt, thus, it functions as a heralding device like the peacock's plumage or a Renaissance gentlemen's augmented codpiece. In elegant simplicity Sedman unites the rigid and the malleable, the natural and the fabricated, the animal and the humanmade, attesting to those forces that can be at once both erotically alluring and destructive.

The focus of this exhibition is to feature works made of silver, or those that look like silver. Apart from similarity in "metal and/or color," as stated in a press release, the criteria for the selection of the objects is not forthcoming, especially considering that the exhibition presents works made by 31 artists with equally as many different personal expressions and concerns. Generally speaking, the fact that the works are made of silver or look like silver is of little consequence to most of the pieces. Although the quality and craftsmanship of the works are of high caliber, this is not exceptional in a field that is characterized by artisans with advanced technical and aesthetic training. Yet, an exhibition cannot demonstrate continuity of concept nor can it adequately display and juxtapose the works of various artists without a carefully delimited focus. The Art Center is generally known for its consistent, high quality, strongly thematic yet pluralistic exhibitions. Thus, one would expect that Artspace, the Kohler's sales gallery, would likewise present engaging exhibitions that would stimulate dialogue and enthusiasm within the field. No art center would be taken seriously with an exhibition of "paintings or things that look like paintings" and such an approach to the exhibition of metals does little to advance the field.

If the field as a whole, including individual artists, collaborative teams, critics, workshops and educational institutions, have aspirations to be mainstreamed into the broader critical art arena, then it is necessary that the exhibitions be directed, focused and acute. Artists do indeed need sales rooms, but they also need exhibitions which contextualize and explain their achievements in forms, materials and ideas.

Michal Ann Carley is an artist, art critic and Associate Curator at the UWM Art Museum at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.





Recent Work of Mary Rogers

Creative Metalsmiths Gallery
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
September 1 – 30, 1992

by Barbara McFadyen

ABOVE LEFT
Calligraphy Brooch #5
22K gold, fine and sterling silver
with shibucihi

ABOVE
Calligraphy Brooch #12
22K gold, fine and sterling silver
with shibucihi

To transcend the boundary of jewelry as mere adornment is the challenge of many metalsmiths. Creating personal works that will evoke emotion and make a connection with the observer is often the aim of this type of self expression. The work of Mary Rogers featured at Creative Metalsmiths Gallery, exemplifies this motivating force. "Putting the mark of the human hand on a piece, this is what elicits a human response and makes a connection with the viewer. Just as native man was compelled to leave hand prints of pigment on rock, the mark of the maker allows for connection of one to another," states Rogers.

The 21 pieces highlighted in this show are works in several different series with an overall sensibility that indicates the artist's attunement with Japanese culture. The visual juxtaposition of powerful broad architectural strokes and delicately detailed interior canvases draws immediate attention to this work. The movement expressed in every piece is lyrical; as the quality of each stroke is like a crescendo and the interiors float on the supporting bars of their musical theme. A counterpoint of textures, granulation, and calligraphic markings characterize these inner "plates." The interplay of chased and scribed symbols is as expressive as the many musical themes and voices of a symphony.

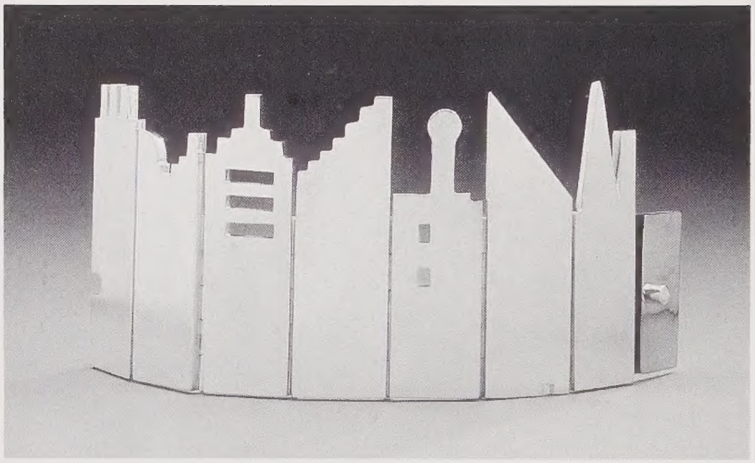
The artist's background in drawing and design is particularly evident in her *Collage Series.* Shibuichi, fine and sterling silver, and 22K gold comprise the materials of these spontaneous sketch like brooches. A vivid contrast of colors from a blue green patina on shibuichi, to the white of fine silver, to the intense yellow of high karat gold provides the surface upon which mysterious markings are left like footsteps in snow. Dotted lines, triangular motifs, scribed hieroglyphic slashes reappear throughout these works; the results of a desire for direct, immediate expression.

The Kimono Fan and Standing Kimono Series present works in similar materials with an oriental theme. Here, the architectural lines are reminiscent of gateways of Shinto shrines. Rogers, who has always been drawn to Japanese culture, began studying the history of kimonos ten years ago. The structural form of the kimono provides her with a perfect format for the formal presentation of textures and patterns. In *Standing Kimono Series Brooch #16* the woman's chrysanthemum pattern is manipulated in silver, then banded and tied in 22K gold. A rhodolite garnet adds a strong central focus against the vertical folds bordered with bright blue shibuichi. In the fan brooches, it is the outer framework, whether open or partially closed, that provides the basis to interchange the canvases and challenge the maker. The aerial quality of these works is also visible in the *Calligraphy Slash Series.* With the upward sweep of bold arched strokes, the experience is almost like that of a kite. Once again the fabric stretched upon this framework is uniquely detailed in a playful and personal manner, yet reminiscent of ancient cultures.

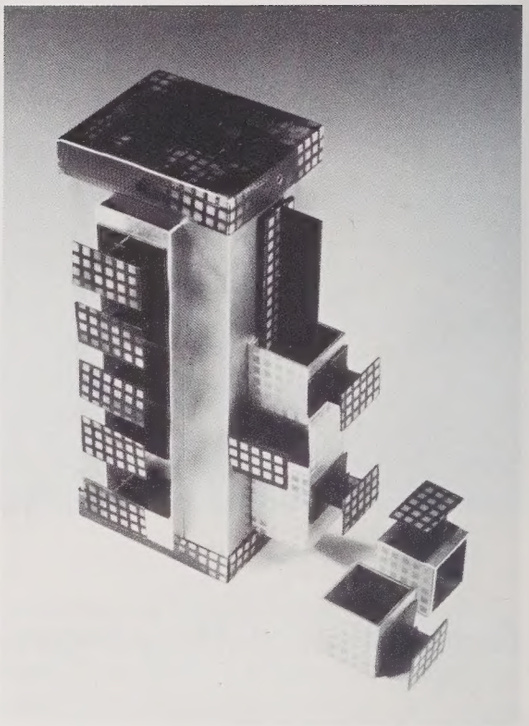
The *Amulet Series Earrings* present a slightly different format. Moonstone, onyx, chinese turquoise, and carnelian elongated drops are richly combined with wrought 22K gold. These pieces are intended to be badges or talismans something that is personal that also becomes personalized by the wearer. Through this relationship, the piece and the wearer become one. "I am not a 'cutting edge' fashion jeweler, I have always been more focused towards that which is classic and can remain for many years," states Rogers. "I hope the pieces I make are well designed yet personal so that they will have enduring qualities and be able to grow with the wearer."

As we enter the 90s, a return to realistic values is apparent. People are recognizing quality, substance and function over bizarre and esoteric nonfunctional formats. The strength of Ms. Rogers' work lies in the fact that she is not only deeply involved in each piece but that she is equally concerned with wearability. This jewelry in this exhibit is exceptional on many levels. It is deft in its workmanship, dramatic in its use of color and surface and powerful yet intimate in scope. Following the movement and inner detail of ancient themes, this work can become a spiritual journey for the viewer's sensibilities. Such is the mark of Mary Rogers.

Barbara McFadyen is a metalsmith in Chapel Hill, NC.



LEFT
ROY
Neopolis bracelet
silver, 3 x 7 x ⅛"
1992



Anne Krohn Graham
Table Tower Vessel
anodized aluminum, 6"H.
Photo courtesy Aaron Faber Gallery

Souvenirs of New York: Jewelry and Objects Inspired by the City

Aaron Faber Gallery,
New York City
July 1 – September 4, 1992

by Lanie Lee

Just as the diversity and density of Manhattan can become overwhelming, so too can an exhibit of works by 25 artists using souvenirs of NYC as a theme. The exhibition at Aaron Faber Gallery offered a hodgepodge of themes and styles that ranged from the abstract to the narrative, and while most of the objects were jewelry there were also wall pieces, flatware, clocks and vessels. Although the majority of works were placed in display cases in two rooms on the mezzanine level, other pieces were displayed in the jewelry store on the main floor and some were in the display case facing the street. As a result, it was often hard to determine what was actually a part of the exhibition. The seemingly haphazard placement of jewelry pinned to gray-clothed boards in display cases and the scattering of objects on the walls in between the cases detracted from both viewing individual works and viewing the exhibit as a whole.

It came as no surprise that the dominant images in the exhibition were the skyscrapers that have made the city both the concrete jungle of the nation and the architectural role model for other U.S. cities. The concentration of skyscrapers on the island of Manhattan has captured the imagination of many in the past and continues as a convention in this show. The cool, sleek vertical lines of these urban monoliths seem particularly compatible with much contemporary jewelry design. In *Neopolis,* a bracelet by ROY, simple straight-edged geometric shapes cast from sterling silver were linked together, building by building, to create a cityscape. A wide band of smooth silver denoted the outline and varied heights of the midtown skyline. Its jagged edge resembled a crown – a majestic yet detached symbol of the city. ROY also exhibited a number of sterling sliver and oxidized brass pins, depicting building facades and titled *East Village.* In some of the pins brass steps led to nowhere in particular. Perhaps these pins referred to the ongoing controversy of gentrification that has plagued the neighborhood for years. ROY's designs simplified the complexity of the city, revealing a beauty often overlooked or taken for granted.

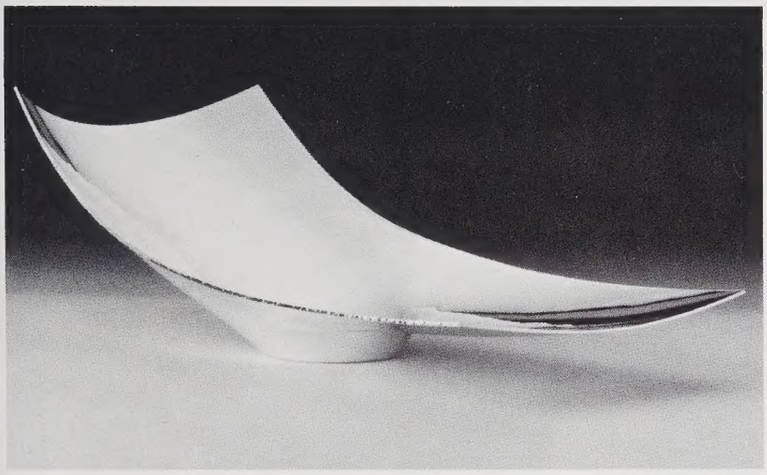
New York City's architecture was also the motif for a set of 10 anodized aluminum containers called *Table Tower Vessels* by Anne Krohn Graham. These freestanding three-dimensional structures, with areas painted with grids of color, formed a whimsical group. As space is always a precious commodity in NYC, some of these vessels served double duty as vases or flatware containers and they also had compartments that pulled out into either napkin or candlestick holders.

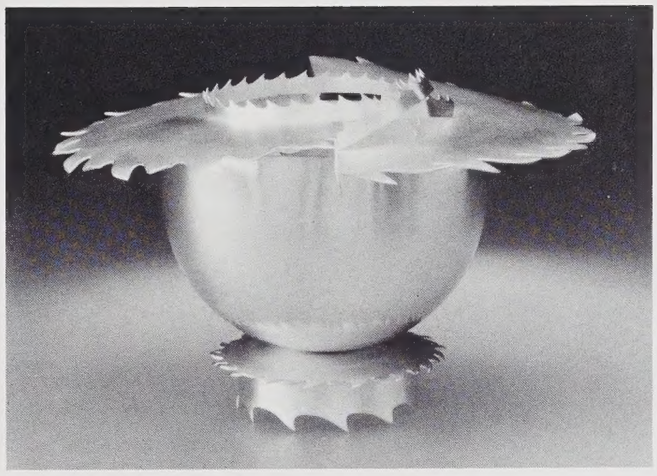
The sidewalk was clearly the inspiration for Chris Darway's bracelet, composed of rectangular sterling frames filled with concrete and embedded with images synonymous with the city. The piece recalled an aerial perspective of New York. Darway successfully alleviated the normally weighty feel of concrete and silver by including light-hearted images on the surface pushing the hardness of the miniature pavement to the background.

Since the Statue of Liberty is probably the single most-used image for souvenir items, it seemed equally appropriate as the inspiration for works in this exhibition. Linda Kindler Priest used different profiles and views of the statue's face to make sterling silver pins that were studded with either opal, lapis, garnet, or pearl. Ms. Liberty also appeared in sterling silver flatware pieces by Susan Provda.

Though displaced people tend to be an eyesore to many (whenever there is a convention, the homeless become targeted for removal), for Antonia H. Schwed they became the focus of two well-conceived pieces. In a mixed-media wall piece, *Vietnamese Veteran Living in the City,* Schwed used a box with variously sized compartments to narrate her theme. Within each compartment were fragments symbolic of the vet's experiences. Objects such as heads, figures, a fetus and a door represented aspects of both the physical and the psychological life. This collage left a jarring imprint and represented an aspect of the city that few dared to address in an exhibit of this nature. The other piece, a small figurine of a black male wrapped in a colorful, elaborate cloak, calls to mind those fragile statuettes that line souvenir shop shelves. Made of enamel, copper, and clay this piece, *Little City Prince* had a fairy-tale aura to it. Perhaps it was Schwed's way of restoring dignity to those that have been stripped of it. These works confronted a social issue that many would like to forget in an environment that oftentimes seems to be an escape from the reality of the city.

Lanie Lee is a writer and editor residing in New York City.





A Sterling Exhibition

Pritam and Eames Gallery, Easthampton, NY
May 23 – June 30, 1992
National Ornamental Metal Museum, Memphis, TN
July 12 – September 6, 1992

by Bernard Bernstein

LEFT
Jeffrey Herman, *Centerpiece*
sterling silver
6 x 11½ x 4½″ H., 1992
Photo by Arling Studios

ABOVE
Susan Ewing, *Ex Voto to St. Eligias: Fruit Bowl*
sterling silver
7 x 8 x 8″, 1992
Photo by Rick Potteige

Pritam and Eames has established a reputation as a showcase for fine contemporary handmade furniture. In recent years it has also featured summer exhibitions of hollowware, jewelry, and flatware by America's top metalsmiths. This summer, for the first time, the gallery exhibited work by members of the Society of American Silversmiths. Thirty-eight members submitted a total of 120 objects to the show. About 75 percent of the work can be classed as hollowware; the rest is flatware.

Most of the work in both categories reveal by their design that the artist paid primary attention to the requirements of function as well as aesthetics and personal expression. In the minority were unequivocal sculpture and, for want of a better term, "metaphors," objects that relate to some functional ancestor but, because of their design or structure, indicate that if an attempt were made to use them, they would not work well if at all. They also suggest stories or messages that cannot be read easily just by looking at them. An example is Susan Ewing's work, which was visually exciting and technically impeccable. I sensed that there was a personal message in the menacing saw teeth of her fruit bowl. Later I learned that there was – she had experienced a near-tragic accident with a bandsaw.

A traditional approach characterized the technical processes used by most of the contributors. Raising, forging, repoussé, mokumé, married metals, texturing and casting predominated. The use of nonmetal materials such as stones, wood and bone was also traditional but not very abundant. One exception was John Marshall's combination of silver and acrylic. Marshall's adventurous willingness to break with tradition in these spectacular containers was also evident in the way his working of the materials resulted in their visual and tactile expressiveness.

The range of skill levels was quite wide. Most of the objects were very well made. A few, because of such problems as firescale, poor fit and finish and flawed solder joints probably should have been held back by their makers (this was not a juried show). One surprise was, in the case of two or three artists, seeing different objects by the same person span the range of technical proficiency.

Among the pieces I stayed with longer were Sue Amendolara's anthropomorphic decanter; Bob Oppecker's raised, sectioned and reassembled containers; Randy Stromsoe's perfectly executed architectonic punch bowl; Jeff Herman's elegant and simple sculptural centerpiece bowl; Leonard Urso's two deceptively simple, textured and repousséd fine silver bowls; Harold Schremmer's vase, a marriage of control and spontaneity; and Ron Pearson's forged, structurally innovative candleholders. William Frederick's pair of vases announced the hand of a master silversmith.

Robyn Nichols submitted several hammered and chased serving pieces which identify her personal attachment to the leaf and tendril motifs reminiscent of Art Nouveau. Michael Banner also displayed stylistic consistency in his ultra-streamlined, long-handled tea and coffee service. There were also some "fun" pieces, such as Elizabeth Nutt's tic-tac-toe game, Robert Davis's "spinners" and Joseph Brandom's ball-and-bowl game.

I have felt for a long time that a potentially rewarding territory for metalsmiths to explore is liturgical work, so I was happy to see the Jewish ceremonial objects of Ori Resheff, Kurt Matzdorf and Fred Fenster. Tom Markusen's tall candleholders would look at home on a church altar, and Michael Brophy's four-piece christening set showed his technical perfection learned while at school in England.

Silversmiths represent a minority in the metalsmithing community, and exhibitions like this do not appear very often. The Society of American Silversmiths and Pritam and Eames Gallery are deserving of commendation for helping keep alive what seems to be a fading art.

Bernard Bernstein is a metalsmith who lives in New York City.

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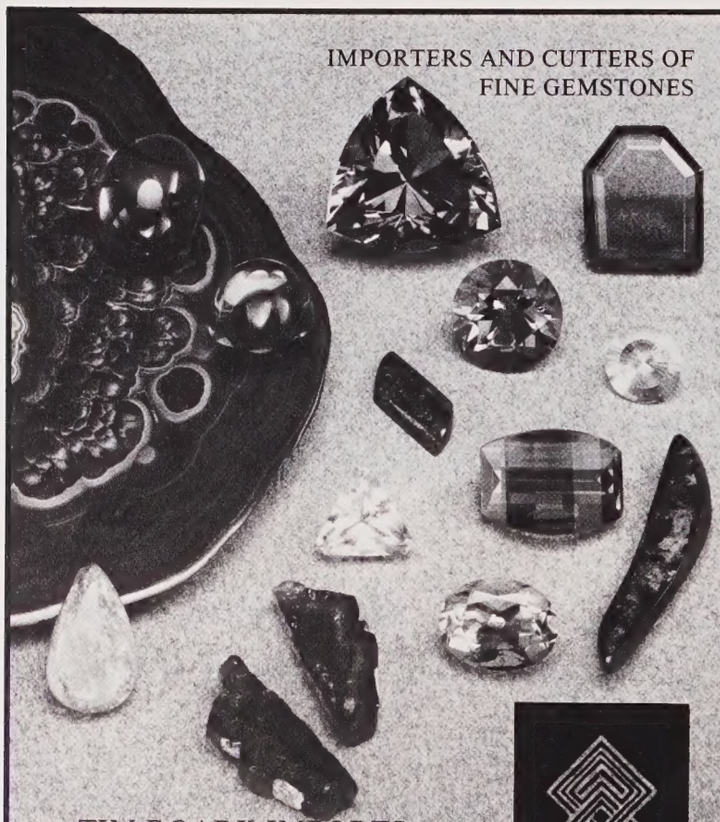

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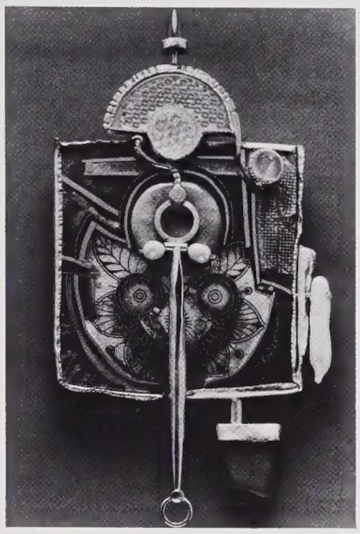

photo: Franklin Parrasch Gallery

William Harper, *1987*

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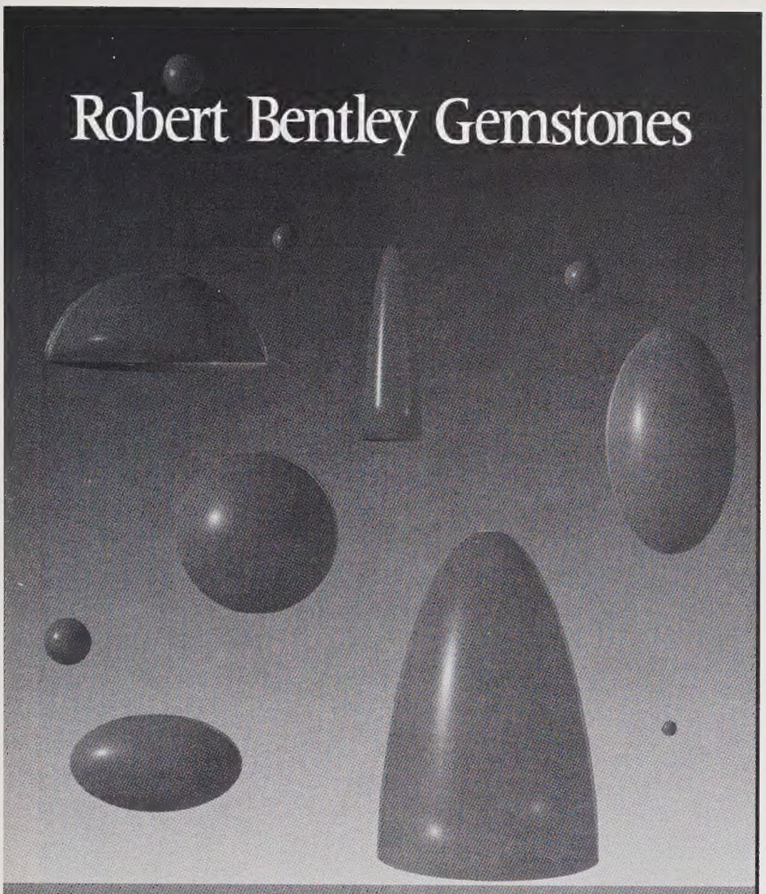

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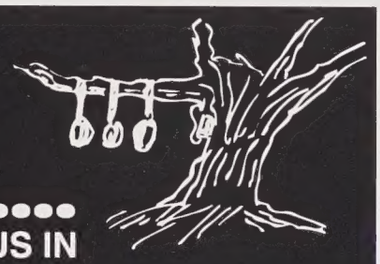

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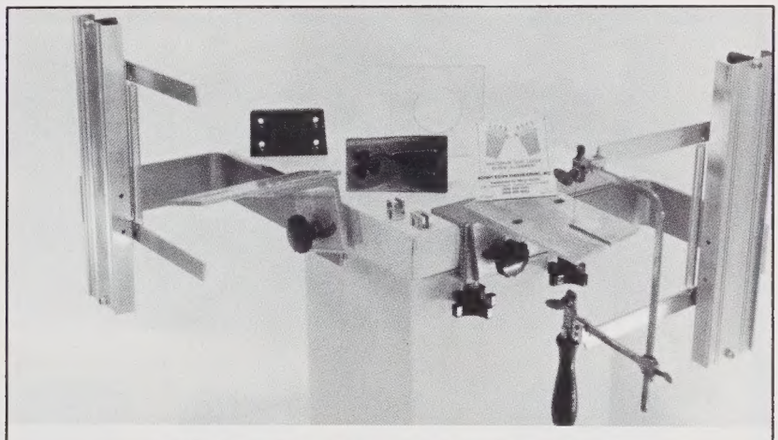

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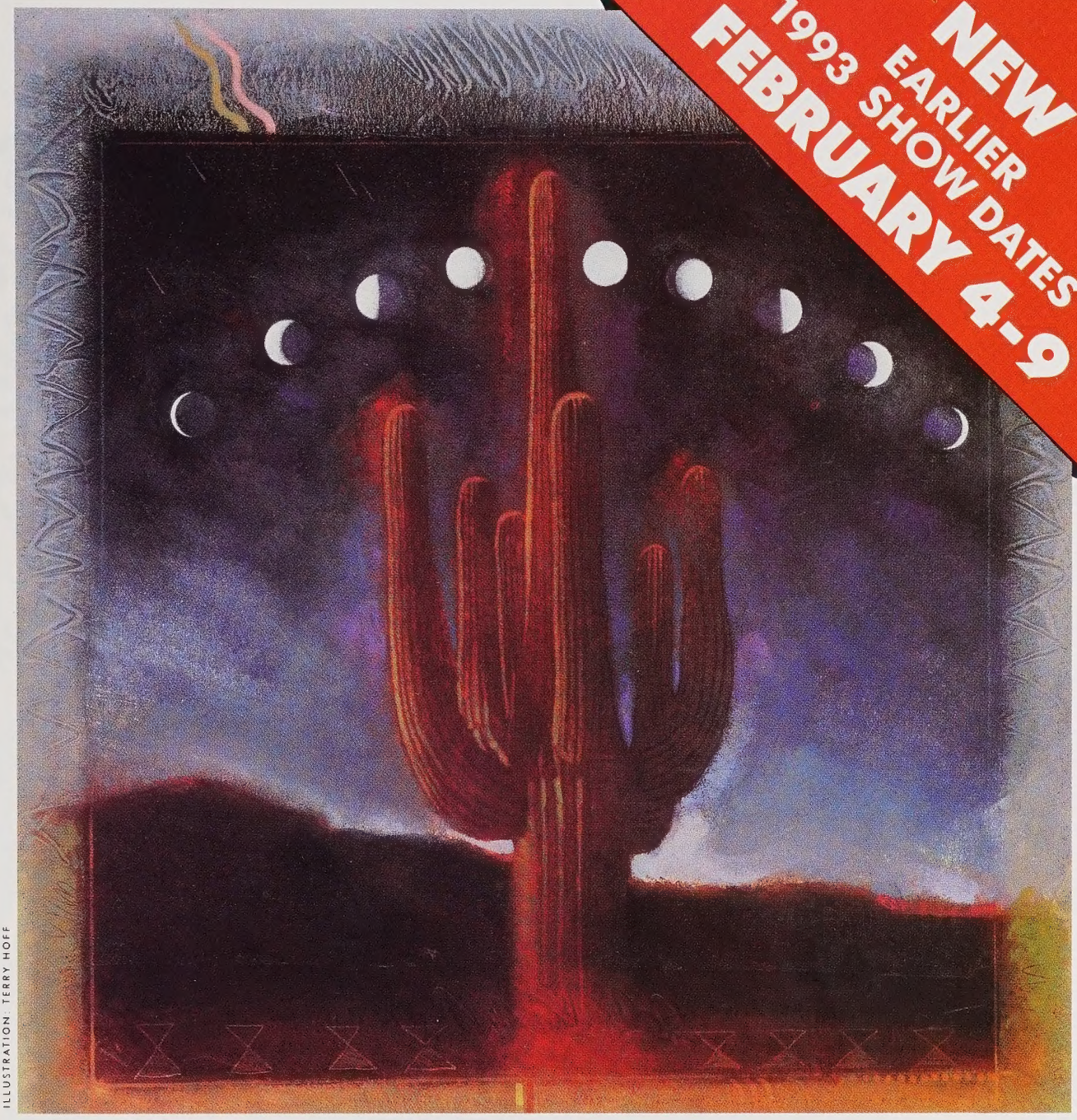

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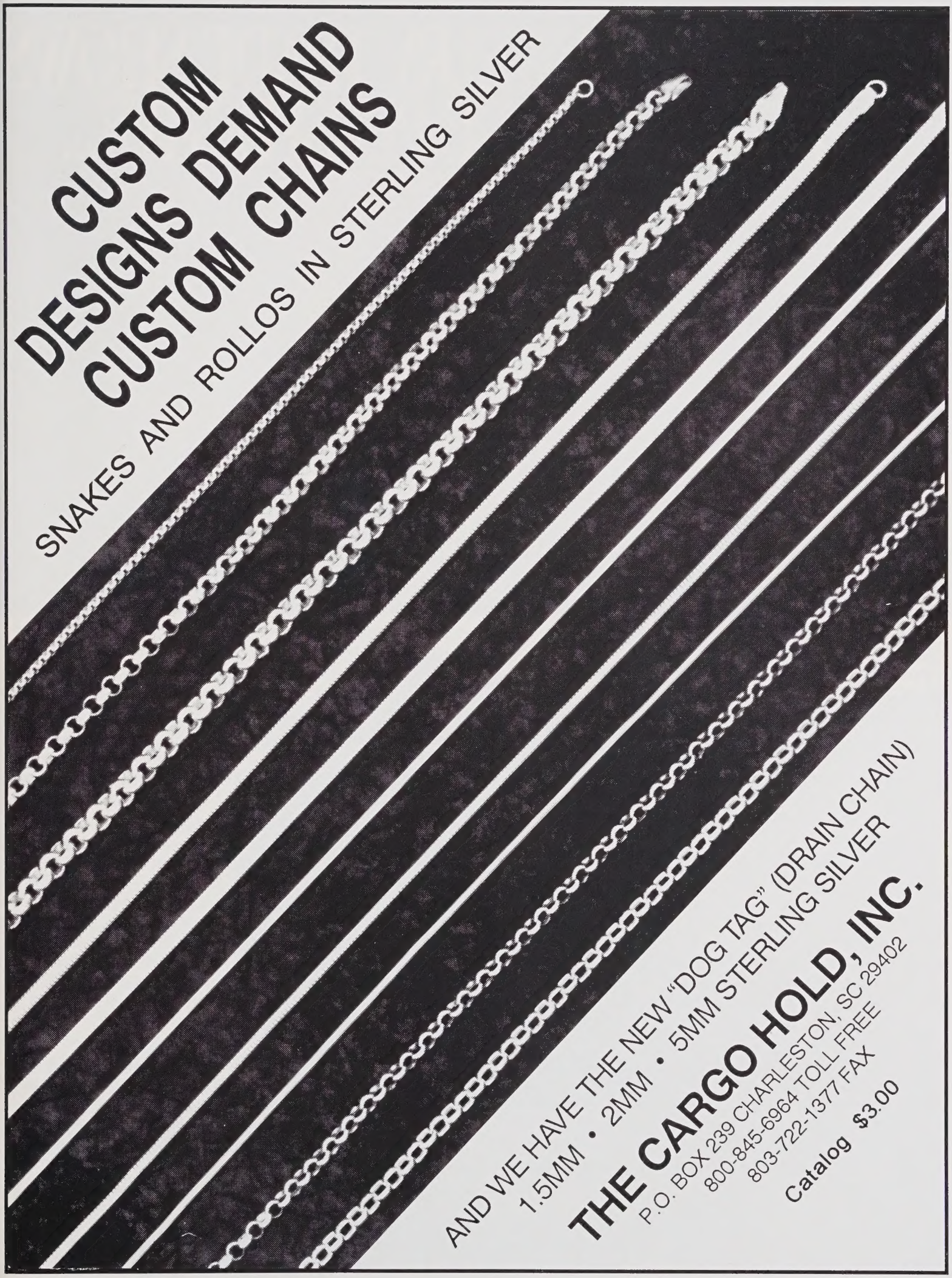
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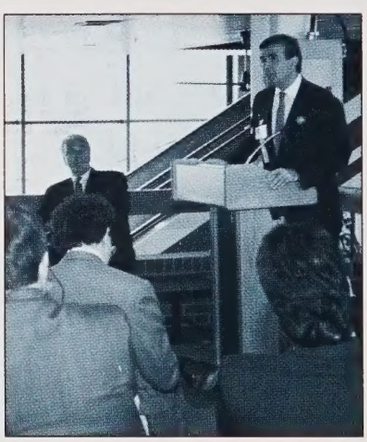
SEMINARS

In depth educational programs developed and presented exclusively for jewelry manufacturers will cover topics such as casting and metal forming, marketing techniques, stone setting, electronic data interchange, and many others.



SOCIAL EVENTS

On Saturday evening, March 20, MJSA's New York Gala will kick-off Expo New York. Taking place in the elegant Sheraton New York Ballroom, the New York Gala will feature the presentation of the second annual Hall of Fame Awards. In addition, various other networking opportunities will take place during the show.

EXPO PROVIDENCE

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Business building ideas are presented from the manufacturer's point of view. Sessions will answer your questions on major industry issues including: exporting, retail jewelry fashion trends, hazardous waste reduction, marketing and JIT among others.

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An annual event for more than 50 years, MJSA's Annual Banquet will take place Saturday, April 17, in Providence on the eve of the Expo. Planned as a lavish evening of dining and dancing, the Annual Banquet will give you the opportunity to renew old acquaintances, meet industry leaders and network with your peers.

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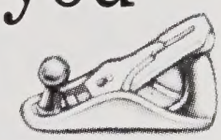

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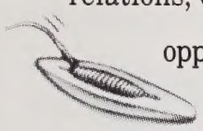

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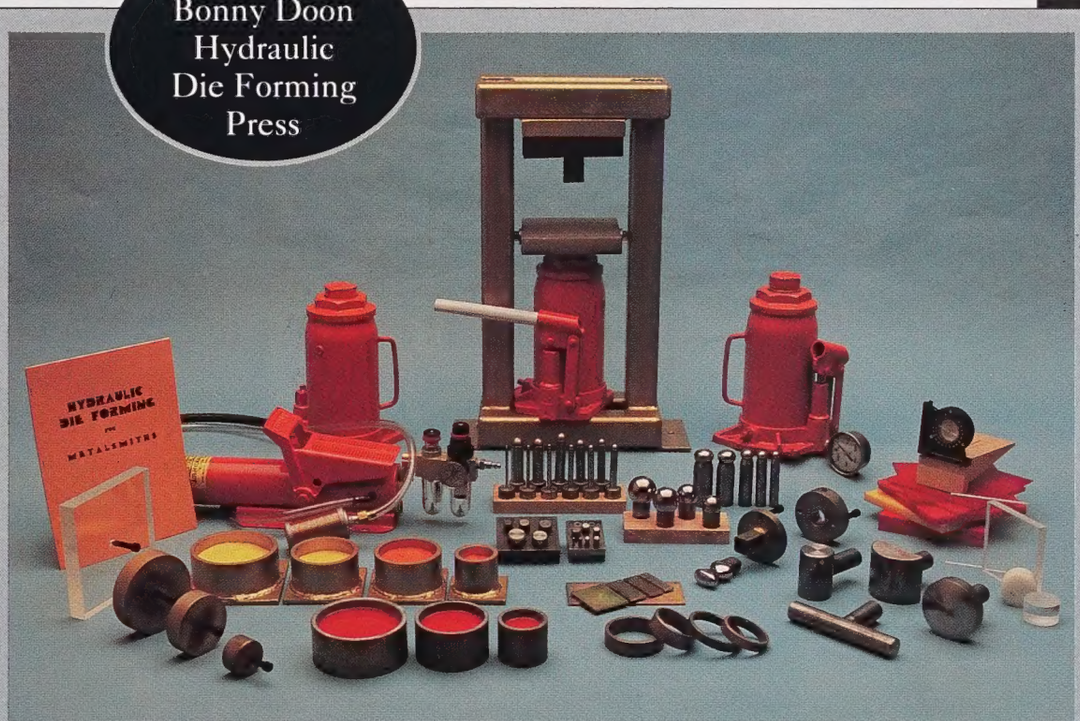

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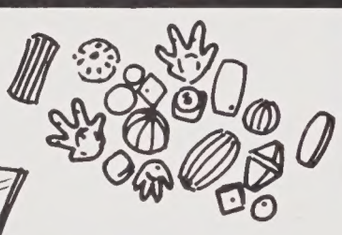

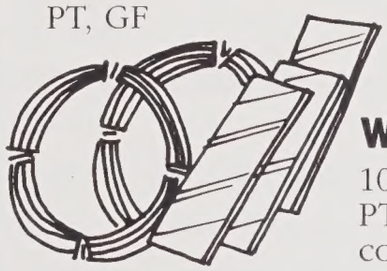

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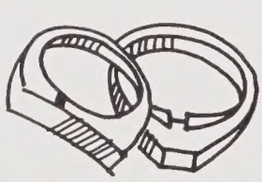

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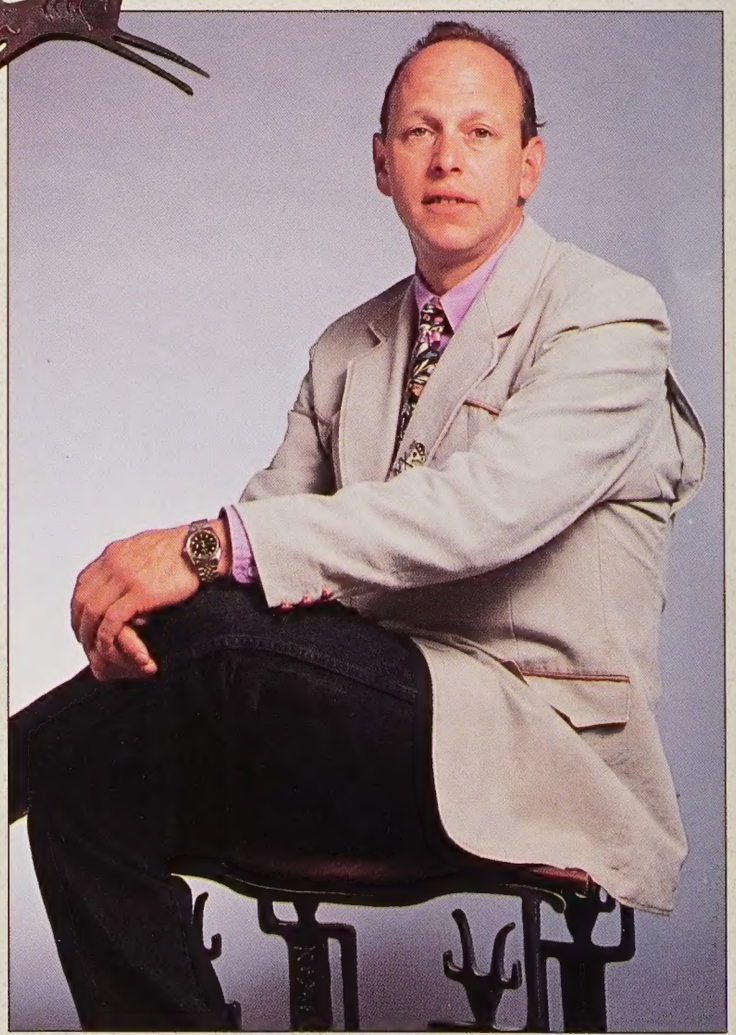

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Membership

The Society of North American Goldsmiths

The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary metalwork and jewelry. Through its publications, services and advocacy, SNAG serves the fine art and jewelry communities. SNAG's publications and conferences provide technical information and critical insight to practitioners and teachers of metalwork. Professional metalsmiths, students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts make up the dynamic mix of the Society.

Services

The Society's annual conference provides a forum for the exchange of many points of view. Speakers of national recognition offer stimulating discourse on a range of topics. Members of the Society attend the conference at reduced rates.

The Society sponsors important exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. Past SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and several galleries in New York City. These exhibitions are usually restricted to members only.

The Society maintains an audio-visual library, which contains the portfolios of distinguished members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent slides, films and videotapes at a nominal cost.

The Society operates a discount book service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

Publications

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Please see the reverse side of this page for a detailed description of this exciting magazine. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Metalsmith*.

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, work-shops, conferences and job opportunities throughout North America.

Membership Categories

The Society offers several types of memberships, each tailored to a specific level of involvement in the field of contemporary metalsmithing.

- *General Membership* ($45) is open to everyone and includes subscriptions to *Metalsmith* and the *SNAG Newsletter*, reduced conference fees, access to all of SNAG's services and full voting privileges.
- *Student Membership* ($35) is offered at a reduced rate to any full-time student attending an accredited educational institution. This membership offers all the advantages of a *general membership* but does not carry voting privileges. Please send a copy of your student ID with membership application.
- *Institutional Membership* ($45) is available for nonprofit organizations such as schools and libraries. Institutions receive *Metalsmith* magazine and the *SNAG Newsletter*.

Checks (drawn on US banks) should be made payable to SNAG, in U.S. dollars only. Contributions are deductible within legal limits for tax purposes. Allow eight to ten weeks to receive your first copy of *Metalsmith*.

P R O F I F O R M 200 & 320

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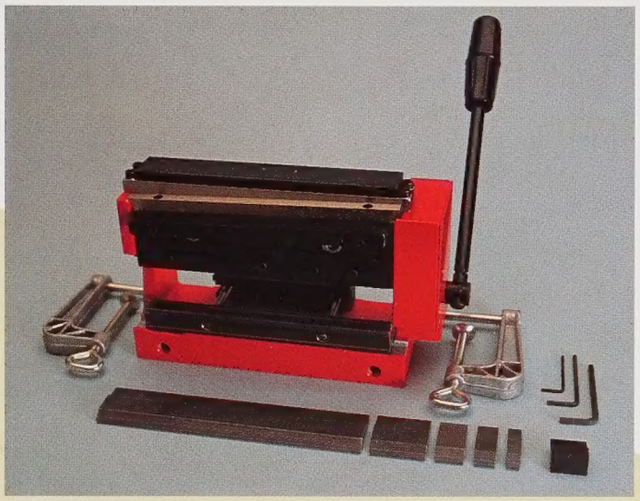

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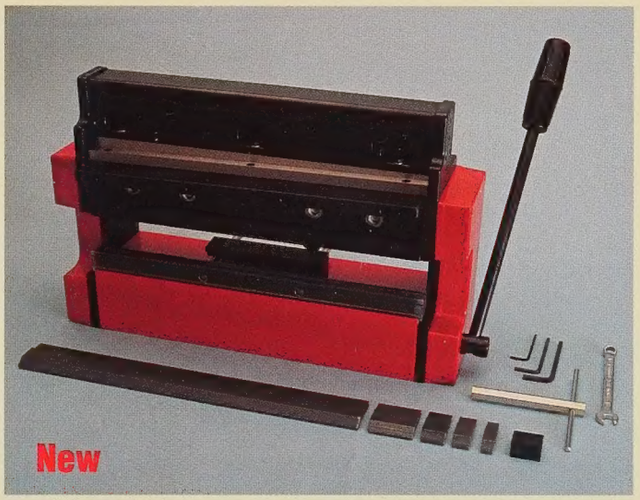

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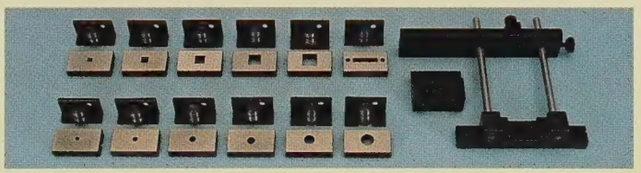

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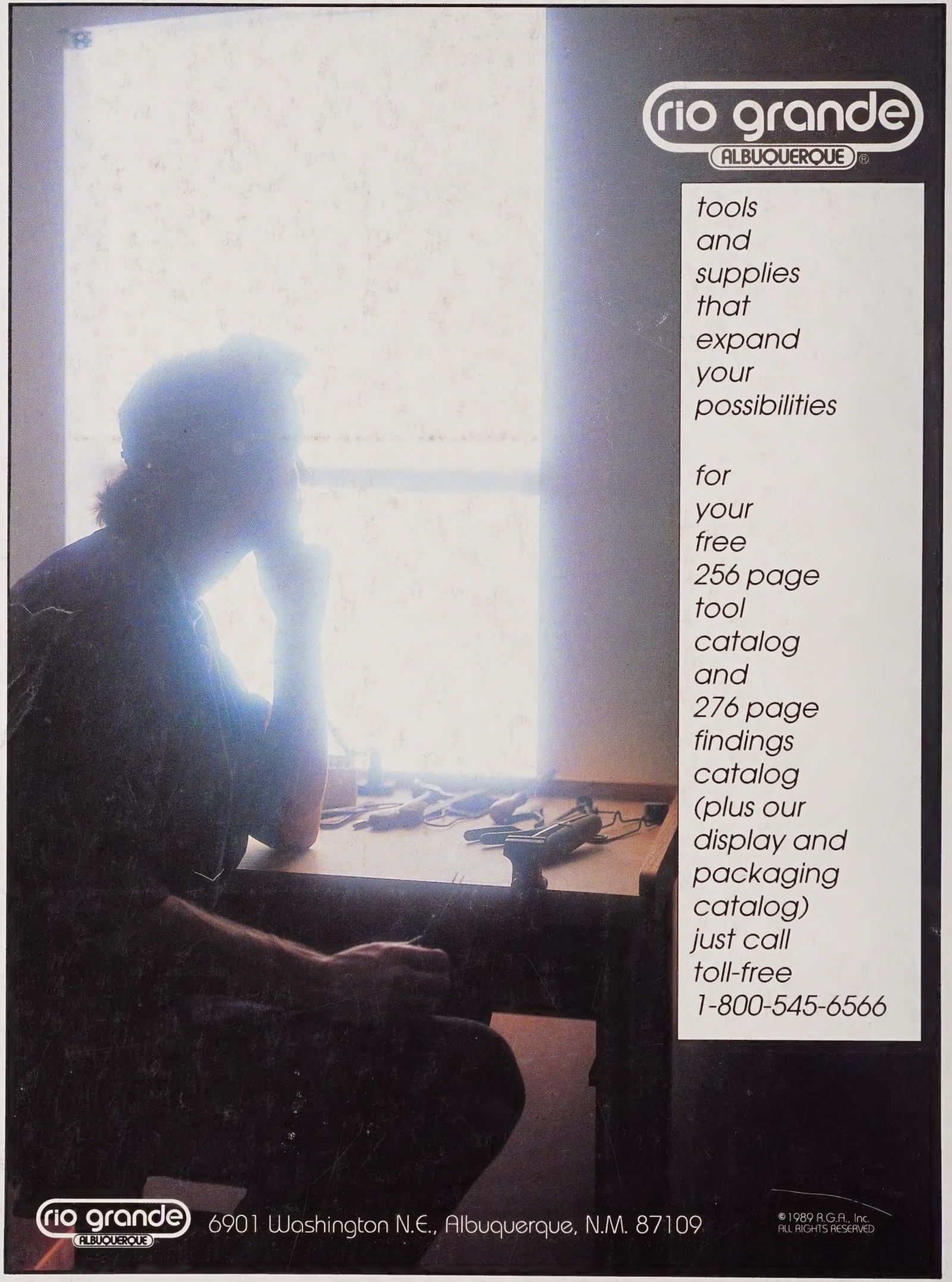

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